

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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The quiet dutchman.....p. 12

The origin of the first Christian
Reformed Church in Canada...p. 10

60th year of publication

Softwood and fried Rice

Harry der Nederlanden

The Liberal government has been turning up the heat on the softwood issue, but it did not result in fried Rice. In her visit to Canada at the end of October US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made no concessions, and she cautioned Canadians that "it's extremely important not to speak in apocalyptic language about this issue."

Softwood lumber comprises only about three percent of the trade between Canada and the US, and Rice urged that it be kept in perspective. In a press interview she pointed out that the two countries have "many, many, many trade agreements" and that past disputes – both major and minor – under the North American free-trade agreement have always been resolved.

A poll taken just prior to Rice's visit indicated that talking tough to the US about the softwood lumber issue is very popular with Canadians. The Ipsos Reid Survey found that, despite a broad, underlying feeling of friendship over toward America, a large majority of Canadians – 78 percent – want the government to take punitive action against the US if it does not abide by the recent Nafta ruling that it should repay the \$5 billion in tariffs it has collected on softwood.

Prime Minister Paul Martin has been gradually toughening his rhetoric accordingly. In a speech to the Economic Club of New York in mid-October, Martin called the US refusal to abide by the Nafta ruling "a breach of faith." He also scheduled a special parliamentary debate to discuss the issue. Earlier he was attacked by the Conservatives and the NDP for being soft on the issue. After

speaking with President Bush on the phone, he told reporters that he had insisted "that it makes little sense to negotiate a victory that we've already won."

There was even talk that if Washington was unwilling to abide by its agreements, perhaps Canada, the largest supplier of energy to the US, should seek markets elsewhere. In a television interview after returning from Beijing, John McCallum, the Canadian minister of natural resources, said that within a few years China could well import one-quarter of the oil "that we currently send to the

United States." He added that the current fight with Washington over steep import duties gives the negotiations with China "an extra little push."

Canada's minister of international trade, Jim Peterson also talked of taking retaliatory measures that include energy. He blamed a small group of US lumber producers with "inordinate political power" for the dispute. In parliament Martin explained that the big obstacle to settling the dispute is not the White House but the US Congress, where the lumber

Continued on p.3...

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Condoleezza Rice with Governor General Michaëlle Jean

Violence escalates once again in Darfur

Juan Mendez, UN envoy for the prevention of genocide, said that Arab militias have escalated their campaign of violence against civilians in the Darfur region of Sudan. He complained that the Sudan government has not abided by a long-standing Security Council order to establish a plan to disarm the Sudanese-backed Arab militiamen.

Mendez spoke of "concerted,

massive attacks of an indiscriminate nature against civilians" in camps in Darfur.

According to the UNHCR, at the end of September a group of 250 to 300 "armed Arab men on horses and camels" attacked Aro Sharow Camp, sending thousands of residents fleeing into the insecure countryside.

The attackers reportedly burned some 80 makeshift shelters,

about one-quarter of the camp's households.

Mendez said the Janjawid, a militia group allegedly allied to the Sudanese government, must be disarmed if peace is to return to the country's western region of Darfur. "Without disarmament of the Janjawid, there is no possibility of reaching a positive solution to the Darfur crisis," he added.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, warned at the end of September that continuing violence in the western Sudanese region of Darfur is hindering humanitarian efforts and creating a chaotic situation there.

Noting that Darfur was a continuing crisis in spite of very effective humanitarian work, Egeland said the level of violence had escalated sharply in September.

If the violence continued to escalate and it continued to be so dangerous to unarmed humanitarian workers, the UN

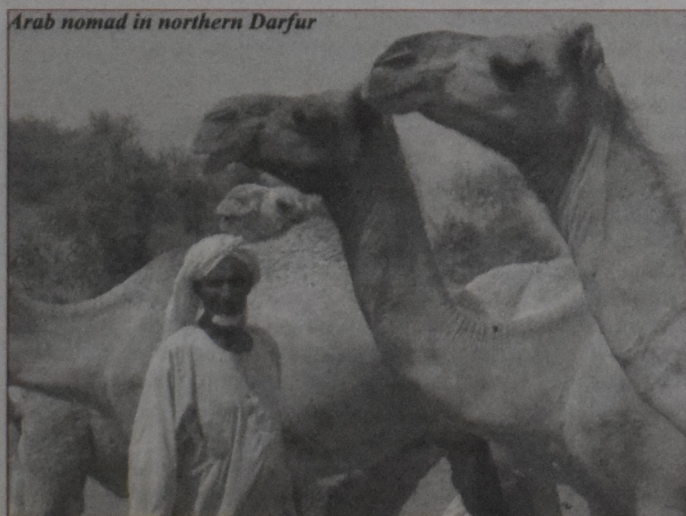
might not be able to sustain its operations for 2.5 million people requiring life-saving assistance there, he added.

Asked if he thought the rebels and the government-allied Janjawid militias still shared the blame for the strife in Darfur, or if it had shifted more to the rebels and bandits, Egeland said all parties to the conflict were to blame for the crisis, and incidents of banditry would continue to increase if the conflict persisted.

Egeland said the recent raids were sometimes attributed to rebels or guerrilla forces. Others were blamed on a splinter group of the SLM/A, while the Janjawid was responsible for some of the attacks.

Government forces also bore responsibility for some of the violence and there were also ethnic militias and armed bandits involved, he added.

According to the UN, more than 2.9 million people continue to be affected by the conflict, of whom 1.85 million are internally displaced or have fled to neighboring Chad.



Arab nomad in northern Darfur

News

Must we seek a personal relationship with Jesus? asks John Suk

Harry der Nederlanden

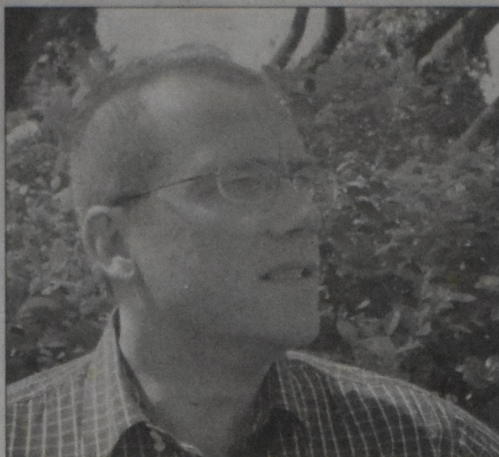
"Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?"

How often haven't we heard that question. It has become one of the touchstones of evangelical Christianity — a sort of litmus test for the authenticity of your faith.

But what does it mean? Is the phrase "personal relationship" biblical or does come from elsewhere? How does it accord with a Reformed worldview?

These are some of the questions posed by John Suk, president-elect of the Institute for Christian Studies and former editor of the Banner. He was "on tour," giving his speech at several different locations to give people a chance to meet him. We heard him at Redeemer. More people turned out than expected and the room became very crowded and stuffy, but no one fell out of a window. It's encouraging to see that kind of interest.

No doubt, it was as much the topic as the person that drew the crowd. Just the preceding Sunday the topic had come up in a discussion of (what else?) the songs sung during an evening worship service. So many of the



a philosophical notion developed by Cornelius Plantinga to support his contention that a personal relationship is possible. By that point, however, we are quite a remove from the intimate person to person relationship he was talking about.

The Gospel of John, noted Suk, is about the meaning of Jesus' absence. After allowing Thomas to touch him, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." When Jesus said that, he was talking about us. We believe even though we cannot touch him or see him.

In the New Testament God comes to us in the flesh, but his appearance was so fraught with ambiguity that few recognized him. Even Jesus' own disciples hardly understood him. What awakens faith, according to John, is not physical sight and contact, but the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.

We may long for more, admitted Suk; in fact, all through history believers have sought a closer relationship with God. But the language of "personal relationship" often promises more than it can deliver. Hence, when they cannot achieve the kind of personal relationship they think they ought to have, many are overcome with frustration and doubt. They feel like frauds and wonder whether their faith is real.

Where does the language of "personal relationship" come from if not from Scripture? In the

nineteenth century science came to dominate the domain of knowledge, and religion was more and more confined to subjectivity, to the inner self. The language of transcendence and sovereignty gave way to the language of Jesus in my heart.

We must be careful about how we imagine God, cautioned Suk. We must be careful that we are not dealing with a "social construct," that is, with an experience shaped more by our culture than by Scripture.

The language of "personal relationship" actually makes it harder to deal with our culture's sense of God's absence and with such events as the genocide in Rwanda or accidents that claim the life of a beloved child. Scripture's language of absence and of lament makes it easier for us to identify with those who experience God's absence. The Psalms of lament give us a voice by which to do so.

Suk suggested that we revisit the Pauline notion of being "in Christ" as described by Lewis Smedes in *All Things Made New* (reissued as *Union with Christ*).

I happened to have been re-reading Smedes recently and will leave you with a quote from that book:

"To be 'in Christ' is to be in the

were "me and Jesus" songs, we remarked. Why are there so many contemporary Christian songs that sound like rewritten love songs?

In his address, Suk took as one of his examples Phillip Yancey, a very respected evangelical writer, who describes having a personal relationship with Jesus means that you spend time with him, talk with him, argue with him and so on. But he admits that since Jesus is not here physically, it is not easy. Moreover, he points out, it is not a relationship between equals. God shows little interest in corresponding on our level.

In the end, Yancey resorts to

What does Scripture say?

The Bible does speak of God's providential nearness, said Suk, and Jesus promises to be present wherever two or three are gathered together in his name. But this is quite distinct from a personal relationship. The prophets proclaimed God's presence, but they did so precisely because it was not obvious to Israel. And the Psalmist often complains of God's distance, not least in the Psalm that Christ quoted on the cross.

In his book *The Disappearance of God*, Richard Friedman observes that in Scripture God's appearances to mankind become ever fewer until they stop altogether.

Venezuela's Chavez plans to expel US evangelical group



Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) — Venezuela President Hugo Chavez says he intends to expel a US evangelical Christian mission organization that he has deemed to be imperialistic.

Chavez accused New Tribes Mission USA, a Florida-based

organization that is said to have about 160 missionaries in Venezuela, of "imperialist infiltration" and exploitation and suggested it has ties with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The Venezuelan leader presented no proof of any ties between the group and the CIA and did not specify when New Tribes would have to leave the South American country.

"This is real imperialist penetration, it makes me ashamed," Chavez said on October

12 during a public ceremony honoring indigenous groups in Apure, a state in southwestern Venezuela.

In a statement in response, New Tribes USA, which has worked in Venezuela for 59 years, said it welcomed "any opportunity to address the president's concerns

and help him better understand our organization and its work." It also said it hoped that Chavez would reconsider his decision and asserted that New Tribes has "not and has never been connected in any way with any government agencies."

Chavez is a paratrooper officer who once led a failed coup. A champion of the poor, he is an avowed opponent of globalization and had clashed with his nation's Catholic hierarchy. His critics, including large segments of the country's upper and middle classes, however, say he is a demagogue in the tradition of other Latin American "strongmen."

Chavez has often sparred with the administration of President George W. Bush over US economic and social policies in Latin America. He also became embroiled in a controversy in August with American evangelical leader and broadcaster Pat Robertson, who suggested that the US should assassinate Chavez.

That controversy was renewed earlier this week, when Robertson

suggested Chavez' government has ties with Osama bin Laden. The charge was described as "absurd" by Venezuelan Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel.

From Christianity Today:

New Tribes spokesperson Nita Zelenak said, "We always respect the laws of countries we work in." She said that similar accusations have come up in the past in Venezuela. The government has investigated, each time concluding all charges against the ministry were unfounded.

"We're there to help the indigenous people," Zelenak told *Christianity Today*. "We're not involved with any government agencies, not involved with the CIA, not involved with uranium mining. Our purpose there is to help the people."

She added, "Any kind of air travel we do, we always do within the guidelines of what the government allows. We always file reports."

On the lavish lifestyle issue she said, "(The missionaries) live in homes that make it possible for

them to continue the work that they do. The homes that they live in are very simple."

In Venezuela as in every area where NTM ministers, "our goal is to help and to eventually work ourselves out of a job," Zelenak said. "As the church is established and the Bible is translated, they don't need us any more. Until that time, we want to stay so we can help them."

Samuel Olson, president of the Evangelical Council of Venezuela, said that he didn't know why Chavez has singled out NTM. He praised NTM's almost six decades of ministry in the country.

Olson cited NTM's many endeavors among Venezuela's indigenous people: building health units and dispensaries, schools where children are taught academics in their own indigenous languages by indigenous teachers. In addition, the group has planted churches with indigenous leadership. At NTM's Bible institute, Venezuelans have become involved in reaching unreached groups within the nation's borders.

Politics/Produce

new historical order created by Jesus Christ and kept alive by his Spirit.... The stress is on the victory that Christ won over the powers of frustration and defeat. It is also on the present lordship of Christ that is exercised on earth through his Spirit. Being in Christ, then, is to be within the rule of Christ, and within the liberating domination of the Spirit" (p.65,66).

In the question period several people in the audience expressed their reluctance to let go of the language of "personal relationship." Aren't we persons and isn't God also a person? Isn't the stress on the need to have a personal knowledge of God an antidote to the kind of impersonal relationship that is mere assent to the truth of God's existence?

Suk was quick to point out that he wasn't out to deny a personal knowledge of God or that faith is personal. In his address he was simply pointing out that the language of "personal relationship" is not as rich as the biblical language; it is a pale version of what we may experience on the basis of, for example, the biblical language of a covenantal relationship. It tends to dispense with other dimensions of our relationship with God that induces awe and even something of what the Bible describes as fear of God.

Rice ...continued from p.1

lobby is very powerful.

However, Tom d'Aquino, president of the Ottawa-based Canadian Council of Chief Executives, said it is "ridiculous" to suggest Canada "might retaliate against the United States by somehow limiting American access to Canadian energy."

"Regardless of how others may have interpreted his remarks in New York, the Prime Minister in no way linked softwood lumber with energy," Mr. d'Aquino said.

Mr. Pettigrew, speaking at a news conference with Rice, said it was imperative that Canada and the United States find a resolution to the dispute because both nations need Nafta to be vibrant and strong.

He also pointed out that, while the United States is Canada's biggest export market, the flow of trade also goes the other way, with about 25 per cent of US goods coming into this country.



Rice and Martin at 24 Sussex Drive

In an Op Ed article in the *New York Times*, Lawrence Herman, a lawyer in Toronto, and Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow with the Institute for International Economics in Washington, offered a compromise to the

stand-off. Create a combined US/Canada trust to manage the \$5 billion for such things as scientific research, pest control and forest fire control of benefit to both countries. And have Bush and Martin each appoint a special envoy with the authority to negotiate a final and durable compromise by a date certain. "The idea is to elevate the issue to the highest level, removing it from the present negotiating framework where vested interests exercise far too much influence."

Although most analysts agree that

Lack of interest in canning cans the canning show

There was talk a few years ago to have a home canning food demonstration at our county plowing match. It was thought that such a show might attract young urban women, their hubbies and kids to come out to the plowing match and learn how to can fruits and veggies.

After some thought and quizzing young urbanites if they would go to a plowing match in a farmer's field on a Saturday in late August, it was decided to can the canning show idea.

The idea was good if we were in the 1950's, the 1960's and maybe the early 1970's. Not now. Our grocery stores have all the produce we want, every week of the year, at decent prices – fresh and frozen. So why go to all the trouble and expense of canning when the produce can be picked up and eaten the same day?

And can you image a young busy working mom buying a pressure canner and canning on weekends?



Before freezers were around canning was the most popular method of preserving. Our mothers and grandmothers canned. In some households, especially in rural areas, canning is still the primary method of storing garden produce. Some people love their canned garden produce.

And I must say I'm surprised to see so many boxes of canning jars in the stores during the summer months. Making jams and jellies are still being done today as it was years ago.

Canning beans and beets are still being done, but not on the scale it was 50 years ago.

One obvious advantage of canning is that there is practically no storage problem. You can can until your basement pantry is full, whereas your freezer space is definitely limited to what goes in under the lid.

In simple terms, canning food means sterilizing it and keeping it sterile by sealing it in containers made from glass. Although commercial canning operations use tin cans almost exclusively, glass-canning jars are preferred for home canning because they require no equipment for sealing.

Sterilization is achieved by heating the food and the canning container sufficiently to kill all pathogenic and spoilage organisms

that may be present in raw food.

For best results, food should be canned quickly, preferably on the day it is harvested. There should be no time lap between steps – you must have all the equipment clean and at hand before you begin. Food spoilage called "flat sour" can result if vegetables, particularly starchy ones, like corn, have stood too long between steps. The canned food may look all right and smell fine, but it will have an unpleasant, sour taste. It won't be fit to eat, even though it is not poisonous, says an old booklet I have on canning.

After processing and cooling canned foods, check their seals. Press down on the center of the lids on glass jars. If the lids do not "give" when you press on them, the jar is sealed properly. If you suspect a container of having a faulty seal, don't take any chances. Either discard the food or open the container and process the food over again for the required time.

Remember your mom, aunt or grandma muttering when she had to re-can the beans over the hot wood cook stove?

Once canned, fruits and vegetables should be stored in a cool, dry place for best keeping. The higher the temperature of the storage area, the more chance of vitamin loss in the canned product.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, in the Handbook of Agriculture (1959) says canned fruits and vegetables will lose insignificant amounts of vitamin C when stored at 65 degrees F. Losses are about 2 to 7 percent after four months and increase slowly to about 10 percent after one year's time. When they are stored at 80 degrees F, 15 percent of the vitamin C value can be lost after 4 months, 20 percent after 8 months, and up to 25 percent after 12 months.

There! Now I'm going to make a sandwich and spread on some home-made peach jam that an employee gave me. Susan, who is in her late 40's, makes all kinds of preserves and sells them – many at my restaurant. Top seller is her red pepper jelly.



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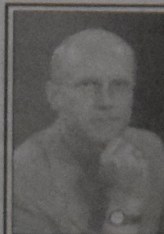
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Editorial

Of the economy of the Spirit

Harry der Nederlanden

There's something I want to celebrate that I – and I suspect most of us – seldom celebrate. In fact, we are more apt to consider it a source of evil. I want to celebrate money. Hooray for capital! Yes, all hail filthy lucre! Three cheers for compound interest!

Okay, I'm not talking about money and wealth as such, of course. A.A. van Ruler in his meditations on Ecclesiastes does a convincing job of showing us that the pursuit of wealth can be an exercise in futility. Nevertheless, if you don't have money, life is very, very hard. Poverty is not ennobling. It is a blight on human life.

Money is nothing in itself, of course. It is a medium of exchange. It enables us to trade goods and labor without having to lug around a lot of heavy stuff to barter with. So it is liberating.

Money is something like words. Both are nothing in and of themselves. They are symbols of something else – they do their job only when they are circulating. They constitute pledges or agreements of a sort.

Without certain kinds of social bonds built on trust, neither words nor money are worth anything. Both are subject to inflation: too much puffery and ... Pop!

I draw the analogy between words and money to claim for myself a measure of expertise. Maybe that's a false pretence. I spent several years in grad school studying the power of words, but I confess I don't know beans about economics. I have learned that trust only goes so far when you want to borrow money; every banker wants collateral.

For a time, my attitude toward money or capital was shaped to a great extent by my reading of 19th century English literature. I especially liked Thomas Carlyle. Some of his prose reminded me of the Old Testament prophets. Like many 19th century British writers, he had a very low opinion of that class of men who engage in business. Business and commerce in his view, and in the view of most writers of the time, was the very opposite of everything associated with art, poetry and the higher things of life. It was invariably depicted as destructive to all that is beautiful and edifying in the human spirit. If a character in a 19th century British novel is engaged in business, chances are he's a villain.

Carlyle coined the phrase "the cash nexus," which meant that money debases the relationship between human beings. It turns social bonds into chains. It harms him who controls it and him who is controlled by it.

About the time that Carlyle was doing some of his most important literary work, Karl Marx was sitting in the Reading Room of the British Museum working on his influential book about the workings of money, which he titled *Das Kapital*. I've only read sections of it, and I should know better than to try to summarize it in a couple of sentences, but here goes anyway. Marx thought that basically money always serves to rob from the worker what is most dear to him, namely, his power to work and to create, and to shift more and more of it into the hands of the capitalists, who are little more than parasites on society. Such an arrangement is bound to go kaput sooner or later, and Marx urged workers to make it sooner.

Since the fall of the USSR, Communism has fallen into disrepute, but Marx's analysis of the way money works, distorting all human relationships, from language and love to religion, is still taken seriously by many intellectuals. With good reason. While money should serve to build community, enabling a greater degree of participation in those enterprises that create the goods that we need to live together and enjoy life, it often does the opposite. More often than not, it serves instead to dispossess and further impoverish those who have little.

Still, although I class myself among the Kuyperian "transformationalists," I do not believe we are ever going to be able to transform the economic system as a whole to rid the world of the evils – the inequalities and injustices – associated with it, with money. There is no comprehensive systemic cure-all. There is no social salvation. All wholesale attempts to implement such a radical cure and to redeem the system as a whole have only brought much greater evils. In pursuit of Marx's vision of a society that isn't plagued by the alienating effect of capital, both Stalin and Mao sacrificed millions of men, women and children and instituted a reign of terror among the survivors.

With this kind of a build-up, how can I still sing the praises of money? Haven't I just shown that it is tainted with blood? Yes, and so are words: words – ideology – have driven people to do all manner of evil. But we would not seek to eliminate language or brand it as a curse.

Actually all of the foregoing is only to celebrate the work of the CRC Extension Fund. On October 22, current and former board members celebrated the 35th anniversary of the fund, which has been administered by Harry Houtman for the last 30 years. I was invited to join in the celebrations, and this editorial is my payback for the good fellowship and the even better meal. Seriously, the speeches and the slideshow presented that evening prompted me to reflect on the amount of good that modest amounts of capital in the right hands can accomplish.

Like most CC readers, I've seen the ads placed by the CRC Extension Fund, but I've never given it much thought. That evening, however, I learned that many of our schools and churches might not have been built (or at least had a tougher time of it) were it not for the fund. It took a few years to build up enough capital to make a difference, but if

you believe Christian church buildings and schools are a good thing, not just for us but for everyone, then you can join with me in celebrating money. And, just to be fair, we should also thank those who made this fund a reality.

The fund got a slow start. Although it was founded under the auspices of Classis Toronto in 1970 with a cash infusion of \$5,000, five years later there was still only \$65,000 in the kitty. But that year also saw the hiring of Harry Houtman, and three years later the fund was already up to \$185,000. That still left many loan applicants waiting because there wasn't enough money to go around.

In 1981, however, the fund was empowered to handle CRC Community RRSPs, and it took off. At present it has assets of \$63 million. As a representative from Classis Toronto said, the initial \$5,000 it put into the fund was "the best investment Classis Toronto ever made."

And it wasn't just a good investment for Classis Toronto; it was good for the entire Christian community across Canada. The fund has served 140 Christian Reformed Churches, 90 Christian schools, ICS, Redeemer, Kings and other Christian organizations – including CC (for several years it subsidized part of the cost of subscriptions for first-time subscribers). In the 35 years of the fund's existence it has not experienced a single failure.

To envision the possibilities of such a communal "bank" took vision. It also took commitment and persistence. We owe a great deal to the volunteers who have kept this "Kingdom Monetary Fund" operating all these years – and with greater repute than the International Monetary Fund. (Some of us owe them a debt quite literally. As a member of Jubilee CRC, for example, I owe the Extension Fund a big debt because we still have to pay back part of our loan. But it's not a debt that keeps me awake at night, like the rich man with the big barns.)

Some of the board members of the fund have served for more than a decade. That's a lot of meetings. But they bore a lot of fruit.

The Extension Fund is a great example of what is good about a healthy democratic society: it encourages people to join together to do needful things for themselves by marshaling their own resources. But it is more. It is a signpost of the Kingdom. It shows concretely that capital need not be alienating or exploitative, but that it can serve to nurture community and to demonstrate the restoring power of the One who lives with us and in us that we may be part of the economy of the Spirit.



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Letters/Debt

Church not one before Reformation

I have just read with interest your editorial on the Reformation. It is not quite correct to say the church was one before the Reformation. That was true only in Western Europe. The Oriental Orthodox split with the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the Eastern Orthodox split from Rome in the great schism of 1054.

Conversations have now begun in ecumenical circles about the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Given the relatively good relations the Catholic Church has developed after Vatican II, the Lutherans and Catholics are hoping to manage joint commemoration (not celebration) in 2017. There may eventually even be a better word than commemoration, but all sides are hoping for some joint recognition of this significant event in church history.

Of course, the many different Christian communions with the Reformation histories are trying to fit in as well. The Reformed have begun planning for the 500th birthday of Calvin in 2009. The radical reformers and the 19th century movements-become-churches (Adventist and Salvationist) are searching for their place. The Pentecostals look back to 1906 and are not really sure they are Protestants. I just returned from a meeting of the Secretaries of the Christian World Communions, a very broad-based gathering, and there, at least, is a high measure of good-will to craft a remembrance that somehow includes all of us.

This kind of spirit also shows in the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The council received the Christian Reformed Church's report about its study of how we view the Catholic Mass through the eyes of the Heidelberg Catechism. Mgr. John Rodano of the Vatican and George Vandervelde of Toronto's Institute for Christian Studies provided a careful, helpful and civil exchange of views. Next year the REC may send an official delegation to the Vatican to discuss our relations with the Catholic Church.

I don't know where this will all lead. As we enter the decades five hundred years from the Reformation, we should begin looking at those events with new eyes. While we hold on to the gospel that was restored to life in that movement, we might also experience a tinge of sadness that this restoration brought disunity along with it. We have some chance now to restore unity along with the truth we hold dear.

Richard van Houten
REC General Secretary

Are Christian day schools run on Credit Cards?

J. A. Boessenkool

According to the latest statistics consumer credit debt is at an all time high reaching some \$290B in June 2005 up some 12 percent from a year ago. This amounts to about \$90 thousand for every man woman and child in Canada.

Is this picture directionally really that much different in the area of Christian day schools? A small sample of Christian day schools representing some 1800 families, reveal a total debt level of about \$20 million. This amounts to about \$11 thousand per family. The sample schools are all in Alberta and BC where provincial governments provide about 50 percent of the per pupil cost excluding cost of land and buildings. The federal government provides a further tax rebate of about 40 percent of the donation receipt that Christian day school users receive.

Now debt is not necessarily a bad idea, and if used well can be of great benefit. Most people under 60 in the Reformed community who own a home will have had a mortgage at some point in time. So it is with Christian day schools, most have some debt outstanding.

In fact, some of the debts held by Christian day schools are the savings of the very folks who support(ed) these schools. Many Christian day schools have their own RRSP/RRIF programs. The latter are a very good idea. It is my observation however that the burden of overall Christian educational institution's debt falls mainly on the shoulders of students and families with young children. It is the way Boards are managing this (ever higher level of) debt that is cause for concern.

An interesting fact of the debt in Christian day schools is that the period over which this debt is repaid ranges from 20 years to infinity. In financial terms we call this the amortization period. In other words some of our Christian day schools will never repay their debt based on their current repayment schedules. This, I fear, may have significant negative long term consequences.

Of the schools I reviewed, the debt levels were of a magnitude that if the repayment term (amortization) was brought back to 15 years, tuition would have to increase between \$200 and \$800 per year per family. Why have I picked 15 years? It is the time span in which little Johnny or Mary is in school. Each of the schools I reviewed had at least one major expansion/addition/replacement in the last 15 years. With current debt levels and repayment

terms these schools may have difficulty maintaining their facilities and (more important) their educational programs.

So what are the questions that arise out of all this?

Will land values continue to escalate to allow increasing levels of debt?

Are Christian day school education "seekers" paying their fare share? A review of donations revealed that these were down significantly over the past few years with minor exceptions.

Are Boards keeping tuition fees artificially low to attract more students? The thinking being the government grants (in Alberta and BC) will cover the incremental cost.

Are previous supporters less willing to support (financially) the Christian day schools in jurisdictions where government funding is a significant factor?

Are we holding the line on teachers' salaries to fund building programs?

How do we balance the need for new facilities and educational programs?

What are some issues school Boards and Society members should review in light of the above questions?

School debt levels. See what would happen if the total debt (including RRSP/RRIF and Leases) were amortized over 15 years at current rates.

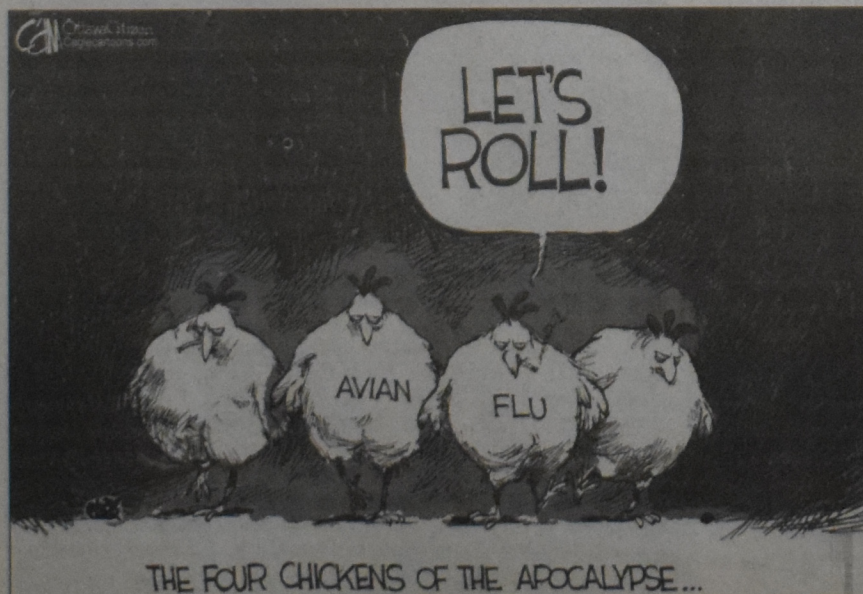
Interest rates. If these were to go back to 10 percent most schools might not be able to meet their debt obligations without very significant increases in tuition. A worse case scenario would be that those who invested RRSP/RRIF money might experience significant delays getting their funds back.

Status of RRSP/RRIF debt. In most cases I reviewed, it ranked behind other institutional loans.

Enrollment trends and demographics in the school's catchment's area.

Affordability – a factor for younger families.

Most readers of *Christian Courier* will be familiar with the writings of brother Bert Hielema. His alarm bells are on a different level than my alarm bells. But mine are closer to home in the Christian community. In a future article I will deal with the effectiveness of tuition relief programs in our Christian day schools.



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Anniversary

60th Anniversary: Divorce, unemployment, recession and the finger of God

In view of the increasing number of divorces taking place in Canada in the late 50s, Remkes Kooistra wrote a long series of articles that glanced at the problem in several other countries as well as here. At the time there were some 6,000 divorces in Canada per year (as compared to over 70,000 per year in recent years). He pointed out that in 1900 there were only 11 divorces in all of Canada and in 1920 only 468. While the population doubled during the 50s, the divorce rate increased 14 times.

Kooistra pointed out the problems with Canada's divorce laws in 1960. At the time, one could only get a divorce on the grounds of adultery. By this time most of the provinces had taken over the responsibility from the federal government, but in Quebec

and Newfoundland the only way to get a divorce was by going through parliament. Either way was very expensive, so poor people could hardly afford to get divorced.

Since adultery was the only legal grounds for divorce, some lawyers and detectives made good money staging scenes that proved adultery to the courts, often with the connivance of both parties. The media created a bit of a scandal when it found out that the same woman served as "co-respondent" (the other woman) in a number of divorces in the same year. In an interview she admitted that playing the role netted her a tidy income.

No wonder that 75 percent of Canadians in 1960 believed new divorce laws were needed. Kooistra, too, believed new laws were needed, but he lamented the change in attitude toward marriage that was emerging. People no longer entered into it for life, he said, but with the idea that they could walk away from it. Many had the attitude: Let's see how long it lasts.

If this was true in 1960 – eight years before the divorce laws were changed – how much more true for the era of "no fault" divorce. While the divorce rate per 100,000 was 36 in 1960, it shot up to over ten times that in the mid 1980s.

After describing what divorce does to families – "tearing the souls of children to pieces" – Kooistra stresses that the way of life is to keep sexuality and marriage together, for that is how God ordained it. At the conclusion of the first part, he says: "Many of our readers will be thankful for the good that God has given them in home and family." At the time few of those in the CC community had tasted the bitter fruits of easy divorce. That, alas, has changed over the years.

Still, no one wants to go back to the time when getting a divorce required an act of parliament – and perhaps photographs of the adulterous party caught in the act.

An ad by H. Van Pelt's Bookstore in St. Thomas, Ontario advertises the

volumes of Berkouwer's *Studies in Dogmatics* from \$3 to \$4 per volume. Less than a decade later, they were twice the price, but by then you could get them used. Although they cost ten times that now, most people earn ten times as much per hour – or at least they get paid ten times as much. Acquiring Reformed theological insight is still pretty cheap.

Homes for sale in Toronto in Willowdale and North Yonge were priced at \$13,800 and \$14,900. Nowadays you pay that much for a parking space in Toronto.

Singing in the gorge

On August 1, 1960, New Life Choir of St. Catharines won the choir competition in Elora, Ontario. Elora is a scenic little town in upper Ontario still renowned for its choir festival and for the deep gorge that attracts thousands of tourists every year. The town has seen more prosperous days. When my wife and I wandered over to the other side of the gorge last year, we were struck by the old factories that had been closed, it seems, for decades and were in a state of collapse. They added a bit of melancholy to the visit.

A photo of Nikita Khrushchev with the caption: "We will bury you." Khrushchev visited the U.S. in 1960. He was used to getting respect in his own country and didn't seem to get enough of it on this continent, so when he was at the UN he pounded the podium with his shoe. It got our attention. CC carried a story describing how nasty Khrushchev and Mao were. We didn't really know how nasty until later. They didn't bury us, but they both buried millions of their own people.

I confess that in the early 60s I was quite turned off by the antics of the anti-communists of the 50s and later, but communism was a murderous ideology. Vast populations were wiped out – populations greater than that of Canada.

An interesting reflection on current affairs by L.W.G. Scholten applied Groen van Prinsterer's analysis of revolution to events in the Congo. The Congo had just gained independence from Belgium and the province of Katanga had declared its independence, so independence created civil war in the country.

As Scholten saw it, the departure of the Belgian authorities left the country with no organic source of authority, resulting in a formal freedom with a vacuum in authority. No group wanted to recognize the authority of someone from another group.

Scholten, however, makes no mention of the role the Cold War played in aggravating the situation as the USSR stirred things up from one side and the US from the other. When the UN intervened the mess became even worse.

Congo is still in turmoil to this day.

Back to Holland

"Dominee, if we would have known that Canada was going to be like this, we'd never have come! We'd crawl back to Holland if we could."

The article by Rev. A. de Jager, speaks of a stream of immigrants returning to Holland. Why was this happening in 1960?

In many cases, people were dissatisfied, said De Jager, because they had come to Canada for purely material reasons – for their own economic welfare. Their motto was, "My fatherland, my paycheck." When they realized things were actually better in Holland, they hurried back to the travel agency.

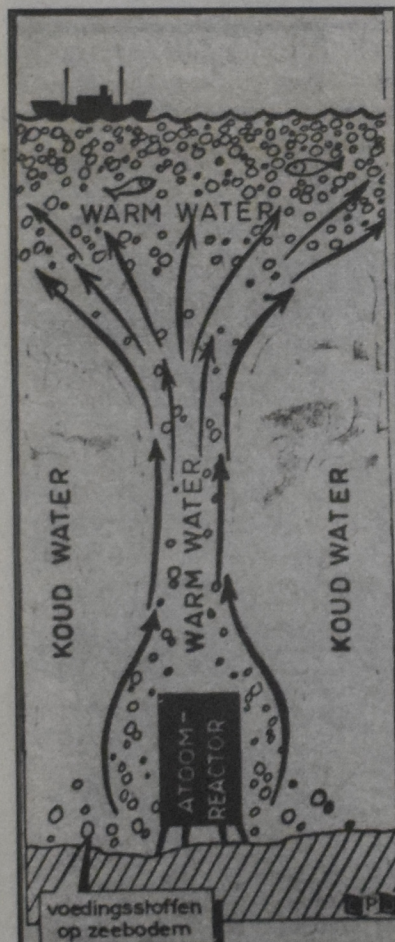
De Jager foresaw the day when, back in Holland, they would once again be standing on the dock in Rotterdam gazing across the Atlantic to Canada.

Perhaps. I recall one family that returned to Holland, and a few years later came back again. But didn't almost every immigrant come to Canada primarily because

Wedding announcements were becoming a good source of income for CC. They cost \$3.50 – but I assume one with a picture cost more.



Mr. and Mrs. R. Oostra were married in the First Chr. Ref. Church in Red Deer, Alta., on Saturday, September 17th, by Rev. G. Nonnekes. The bride is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Visser of Red Deer. Mr. Jan Oostra, the father of the groom, travelled from Holland to be present at the ceremony. The address of Mr. and Mrs. Oostra is 4705 - 102 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta. Mr. Oostra is business-agent for the Edmonton local of the Christian Labour Association of Alberta.



This illustration accompanied a story that described a plan by scientists to increase the number of fish in some parts of the ocean. A nuclear heater placed on the bottom of the ocean would warm the water and also bring nutrients up from the bottom. One suspects the project never got off the ground. Perhaps someone with common sense raise a few questions.

Anniversary/Stewardship

Iron Springs CRC



it offered greater opportunities if not for them then for their children? No one that I ever met immigrated because they saw themselves as missionaries for Calvinism.

Those who were seized by such a mission, it seems to me, were enlisted after the fact – maybe because they sensed a vacuum of authority in Canada.

A large ad for the CRC Co-op Medical and Hospital Society informed CC readers that coverage for the entire family was only \$30 per year and for singles only \$12 per year. The ad warns against health insurance programs operated for profit. Our program, the ad claimed, never dropped anyone's membership because they made too many claims.

In the same issue an ad from Ontario Hydro encouraged Ontarians to enjoy the comfort of an electric blanket. At the time, Ontario Hydro was trying to increase power consumption!

The finger of God

Writing about the recession that caused so much unemployment in 1960, Dave Valstar cautioned against joining in the call for all sorts of political and economic solutions, such as import restrictions, easier credit, limits on immigration and so on. Such solutions are a dime a dozen, he said.

We must first of all discern the finger of God in such hardships. We are not fatalists who see social and economic problems as simply part of the cycles of life. Nor do we believe in a social gospel that says we can lift ourselves up by our bootstraps.

We must see God's correcting hand in the recession, says Valstar,

and we must ask, 'Why is God punishing our country and our people?' From what sins are we being called to repent? For what must we ask God's forgiveness and renewal by his Spirit?

We must look to God rather than to our own moral selves and our own political fixes. But, says Valstar, we are not even able to discern precisely the nature of the sins that beset us. Only almighty God is fully able to do that.

Nevertheless, we must confess:

- that we have achieved such a level of welfare that we have forgotten our dependence on God.
- that we have begun to worship the almighty dollar.
- that we have debased labor into a necessary evil.
- that we have contributed to the rise of unions that do not acknowledge Christ's kingship.

And this is only a partial list of what Valstar called us to confess in response to the finger of God he discerned in the recession of 1960.

Nothing comes by chance, he concludes. In all things we must discern the finger of God, who is calling this land and this people back to him. His finger points to us, to our deepest needs and points us ultimately back to him.

Valstar always offered a lot of food for thought.

As part of her summer tour of Alberta, Tini van Ameyde visited the new Christian Reformed church in Iron Springs. A year earlier, the CRC folks of Iron Springs had built their church – for the second time. The first one had been built by volunteer labor under the leadership of fieldman Bernard Nieboer, whom Tini visited. One Saturday, right after the new

Estate planning: putting limits on enough

"Honey, I am expecting a raise in about two months, then things will be better for us financially!" How often haven't I heard that before or thought the same. When I get the next promotion or raise, things will be better. But the question is will it ever be enough? We seem to have an appetite for more than what our finances really allow.

Contentment is a great thing – almost a godly thing. To be content and satisfied with the role and situation in your life, with all your assets, talents and abilities is God-honoring and calming to your soul.

In the Bible we read of a man who had an abundant harvest and he wondered what to do.

Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' (Luke 12: 18, 19)

Now you might say, here's a contented man. He's basically saying, I have enough; no sense striving for more! He put the limits down and said I've done enough.

Once I asked a senior in a congregation I was serving as elder if he would allow his name to stand as elder. I was disappointed when he said no. Here was a capable man, still healthy, retired and lots of experience to share. But he refused to let his name stand because he and his wife would be spending a lot of time away (snow birds). In his defense he said I served numerous times as elder, now it's time for others to serve.

That response is not unusual.

In Canada, we have a high regard for 'retirement' or 'freedom 55'. We even say we deserve it. But in this way vast amounts of resources that could service ministry today are socked away in mutual funds and retirement plans. Usually they are invested to maximize returns, often without thought about what the money is really invested in. This is not unlike the situation the parable addresses.

Jesus, of course, shoots higher and warns us not to strive for earth-bound contentment and then he unlocks the key to true contentment:

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what

kitchen had been finished in the basement, the first church burnt to the ground, and the congregation had to begin all over. Most did not know the church had burned down until they came to church Sunday morning, for the fire happened Saturday night.

At the time Iron Springs CRC was comprised entirely of farming

families, Mrs. Nieboer told Tini. In the late 40s and early 50s Mr. Nieboer found a place for many Dutch immigrants working in the sugar beets. Later many of them were able to start their own farms.

The Iron Springs congregation was begun as the sister church of the Nobleford CRC on April 8,

you have prepared for yourself?" "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12: 20, 21)

Our wealth can be a shackle on our ankles or it can be a tool for God's kingdom enterprise. It's up to us to pray about it, to decide when enough is enough for myself and my family and then to make plans that are 'rich toward God.' In true stewardship fashion, even that which we set aside for ourselves and our families can be 'rich toward God.' This is the case when we realize that our relationships as husband and wife and as parents and children and grandchildren are also part of God's kingdom work.

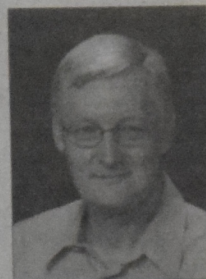
Be content. Put limits on enough for yourself and continue to grow in being "rich toward God" until the day the Lord takes you home.

Stewardly Tip: When it comes to estate planning and wills, take advice from the experts especially if the experts are also Christian. Take advantage of the services of that Christian Stewardship Services in Canada and the Barnabas Foundation in the US offer – free of charge. You determine when enough is enough and where the rest goes. It helps to have the balanced advice of an independent Christian counselor who does not profit from your choices one way or another.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Serving the Least of These: A Steward's Challenge

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1949. It lost a number of members in 1952 when several families moved to Vauxhall to work on an irrigation project.

In 1960 the congregation consisted of 56 families and still had one Dutch service every Sunday as well as an English service.

Church

French religion faces new future 100 years after church-state-law

Stephen Brown

Evian, France (ENI) — One hundred years after the official separation of church and state in France, the country's secular stance faces new challenges due to shifts in the religious landscape, says a top Protestant leader.

Protestants — a tiny minority in traditionally Roman Catholic France who were historically persecuted — welcomed the separation of church and state in 1905 because it allowed them to exist "on equal terms with Catholicism", the head of the Reformed Church of France, Rev. Marcel Manoel, told church leaders from around the world gathered in Evian, on Lake Geneva.

But the change in France's religious make-up is fueling mistrust, conflict and a sort of "secularist rigidity," Manoel noted in an address to the October 6-15 executive committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which groups 75 million Protestants worldwide.

Among changes highlighted by Manoel have been the growth of Islam and the mushrooming of new religious groups. Though no official statistics on religious affiliation exist, Muslims are reckoned to account for between five and ten per cent of France's 60 million population.

Still, suggested Manoel, "The

Muslim presence has become more visible but there is no certainty that the way they practice their religion will not change profoundly in a secular culture."

In recent years there has been fierce debate about whether female Muslim students may wear the Islamic headscarf to school, and the adoption by parliament of a law against "sects" in 2001, generated strong criticism from Protestant and Catholic leaders.

Protestantism remains largely supportive of the secular stance because it prevents "any religious take-over of power in politics," noted Manoel, the president of the Reformed church's national council. But, he cautioned, there was a need for vigilance because the religious freedom of some groups was not always guaranteed.

"Evangelical groups are suspected of being dangerous sects, immigrant churches, particularly African churches, suspected of political scheming, or church movements and agencies discriminated against because they clearly affirm their Protestant identity," he said.

This means the more established churches have to react. "We have to show our solidarity," he said.

The growth of immigrant churches in big cities is also affecting traditional denomina-

tions, the Protestant leader said. "In the beginning they were ethnic churches and then they opened up to the French public," Manoel explained. "The question is how to demonstrate that in our diversity we are the one church of Jesus Christ."

In other ways, too, the Reformed church, which with about 300,000 adherents is France's biggest Protestant denomination, is experiencing dramatic changes.

The number of active members has halved over 50 years, and congregations in traditionally Protestant areas — especially the countryside — have shrunk and there has been a 30 per cent drop in ministers. Still, parishes in big cities like Paris are now growing, and more people, especially women, want to become pastors.

In the past, Protestant church participation was passed down through the family, noted the church leader. Now interest is shown from people with no traditional links to the Reformed church, like "Catholics disappointed with their church, as well as Evangelicals and non-believers," Manoel elucidated.

"Without doubt there are fewer people but they are more active," he asserted. "We are beginning to see a new way of being the Church which is less about organizing members and more about helping them to witness in contemporary society."

Christian leaders warn unity movement could be halted in its tracks



Rev. Samuel Kobia

Chris Herlinger

New York, (ENI) — International church leaders meeting in New York have declared that the movement for Christian unity will prosper in the future only if it becomes less tied to institutional structures and becomes more inclusive.

Institutional ecumenism "is in stagnation. The challenge is, how can we go beyond institutional ecumenism and make it a healing reality," Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Apostolic Church and moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee, said in a speech at a October 22 symposium.

The symposium focused on a subject of increasing importance to churches and church leaders: how to navigate the future of the ecumenical movement amid

social and global changes that are shifting the centre of Christianity away from Europe and the United States to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Aram said the ecumenical movement can no longer afford to be "a private club for conference-goers and church hierarchs," a theme also sounded by the Rev. Samuel Kobia, a Kenyan Methodist who is the WCC's general secretary. He has declared the need for WCC member churches to be in dialogue with evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic groups that do not belong to the Geneva-based church grouping.

"New conditions and trends may pose impediments to business as usual, blocking one's well-traveled way or making nonsense of comfortable custom," Kobia said, noting that no institution that has emerged out of the ecumenical movement, including the WCC itself, "is eternal."

The WCC groups 347 churches, in more than 120 countries in all continents from most Christian traditions.

"If we are determined to act as we have always acted, to depend on institutions shaped entirely by past realities, we may be halted in our tracks," Kobia said. The present model may become "too clerical, too dependant on leaders ordained by member churches" and may lose "the energy provided by active laity including students, youth and women's fellowships," the Kenyan Methodist warned.

The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, said there needed to be new approaches, based on "compelling spiritual vision rather than predictable organizational momentum, and by deep change rather than incremental change."

Three killed in Egyptian riot following screening of Christian play

Michael Ireland

EGYPT (ANS) — Three people died during a riot outside a Coptic church in Alexandria, Egypt, after a protest against a play accused of offending Islam.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported Police used sticks and tear gas to hold back a crowd of some 5,000 protesters who marched on St George's church.

Dozens of people were injured in the crush. One man who died was trampled and had inhaled tear gas, police said. The same week, a Muslim man stabbed a nun in protest at the sale of a DVD of the play, staged at the church in 2003.

The demonstration was the latest in a series of incidents at the church related to the performance of the play. Entitled "I once was blind but now I see," the drama

tells the story of a poor young Copt who is drawn to Islamist militants but then becomes disillusioned.

Coptic Christian leaders have said the play depicts the dangers of extremism, not of Islam. "Copts would never tolerate anyone insulting Islam," Coptic Bishop Armia is quoted by Egypt's official Mena news agency as saying.

The Egyptian Interior Ministry described the protesters as "fanatic elements" who "escalated a negative reaction to a play," according to the Associated Press (AP). He said the demonstrators gathered near the church in the Mediterranean port city after Friday noon prayers at local mosques.

Stones were thrown at the church and police officers, injuring 20, and cars were set alight before police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. Dozens of people

were arrested.

Relations between Muslims and the Coptic minority — which makes up 5-10 percent of Egypt's population — are generally calm, although tensions sometimes flare. Copts remained the majority in Egypt for centuries after the 7th Century conquest of the country by Muslim armies.

Nowadays, Copts complain of discrimination in the workplace, restrictions on church construction and periodic fears that Christians are being forced to convert by Islamic extremists.

The riot was sparked by the distribution of a DVD of a play that was performed at the church two years ago. The church's director, the Rev. Augustinous, said it was difficult to explain the reaction to a one-time performance that took

place two years ago.

"There are so many questions about what is behind all of this," he told the AP in a telephone interview. He denied the play was offensive to Islam because its Christian hero is ultimately saved by a Muslim friend.

Egyptian security officials accused Islamic militants of distributing the DVDs to stoke sectarian tensions ahead of legislative elections Nov. 9.

It was the second mass protest over the play in the past week and came two days after a young man stabbed a nun and a man. Their injuries were not serious and the attacker was arrested, the security sources said.

Michael Ireland is a freelance journalist and the Chief Correspondent for ASSIST News Service of Garden Grove, California.

Church

In Indonesia, the struggle within Islam

Tom McCawley

JAKARTA, INDONESIA—Here in the world's largest Muslim country a war of ideas within Islam is playing out on an unlikely stage: a bohemian arts community in a crowded Jakarta side street. The patrons of the Utan Kayu Theater, including some of Indonesia's leading novelists and writers, normally gather to discuss such topics as avant-garde art or prewar Russian cinema.

But in recent weeks, a fierce debate over how Muslims should be allowed to worship, marry, and even think has caught the theater in its crossfire. Hard-line Muslim groups have been threatening to evict the Liberal Islam Network, a small group of intellectuals known as JIL, from their offices in the theater complex at the beginning of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

The struggle, observers say, is not only over how to interpret Islam's 1,400-year-old holy book, the Koran, but what role it will play in Indonesia's future. The tensions are driving a rising confrontation between liberals and an alliance of conservative and radical groups.

JIL's crime, according to the white-robed vigilante group the Islamic Defenders Front, is spreading liberal ideas about Islam. "The intellectual fight has turned physical," says Nong Darol Mahmada, a female JIL member, telling of death threats by telephone. The Islamic Defenders, famous for attacking cafes with samurai swords, have also tried to recruit nearby poor residents to help evict JIL and its supporters, including a radio station and media think tank. JIL is preparing lawyers, and plans to seek protection from the courts.

The threats from the Islamic Defenders follow a series of fatwas, or religious edicts, from Indonesia's powerful Islamic scholar's council, the MUI. On July 29, the council issued fatwas condemning "liberalism, secularism, and pluralism." The 11 fatwas, read to a meeting of 400 Islamic scholars from across the country, also condemn inter-faith prayers and marriages between religions.

Growing power of conservative Islam

JIL activists say that fatwas mark the growing power of ultra-conservative Islam,

a movement that unites both elected politicians and street vigilantes. Supporters of the fatwas say they are following their duty to protect Islam from the threat of globalization and Western ideas.

"The liberals think everything is open to interpretation," said Ma'ruf Amin, head of the MUI's fatwa commission, "and that clashes with Islamic teachings."

Syafi'i Ma'arif, former chairman of Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, the 30-million strong Muhammadiyah, warned reporters that: "the fatwas will embolden hard-line, power-hungry groups." Since July 29 an alliance of Muslim vigilante groups, the Anti-Apostasy Movement, has stepped up a campaign to get rid of informal prayer groups and churches, causing a total of 23 to close within a year.

Mobs have also attacked the houses and mosques of the 200-member Ahmadiyah, a Muslim sect, declared by the fatwas to be "deviant," because they recognize their founder to be Islam's last prophet instead of Muhammad. In an interview, the MUI's Mr. Ma'ruf tut-tut over the closures, condemning violence, but noting that "the churches didn't have permits."

Since its arrival from the Middle East in the 11th century, Islam has nestled alongside older Hindu, Buddhist, and animist practices. Only a tiny, violent fringe openly supports terrorist attacks such as last weekend's suicide attack in Bali that left at least 26 dead and 100 hundred injured.

Most of Indonesia's 193 million Muslims — 88 percent of the population — practice a moderate form of Islam. Muslim Indonesians often give their children Hindu names, and religious minorities such as Christians are protected under the constitution.

JIL's founders say the group was formed in 2001 to protect this spirit of tolerance through its activism, radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles. "We just want to be able to discuss religion in the same way you can discuss art or politics," says JIL coordinator Hamid Basyaib.

JIL's mission statement says the group believes in *ijtihad*, or the application of reason to interpreting Islamic texts. The use of *ijtihad*, Mr. Hamid says, has led its

members away from a literal interpretation of the Koran and toward support for the separation of mosque and state.

The group has also offended conservatives by arguing that truth is relative and that other religious faiths are equal to Islam. Even worse, say hardliners, is JIL's support for the "freedom of belief," including the right not to be religious.

Mr. Hamid also rejects criticism that liberal Islam is an American import, claiming the group draws on an ancient tradition of Islamic scholarship stretching to thinkers in the 14th century.

JIL part of wider liberal network

Mr. Ma'ruf says that JIL is just part of a much wider network that includes several major state universities. He also warns liberalism has gained ground in the world's two largest Muslim organizations, the 40-million strong Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the 30-million strong Muhammadiyah. "Some things, some passages, [in the Koran], are beyond question," he says from NU's headquarters. "It is heretical to question the literal word of God," he says.

But JIL activist Abdul Moqith Ghazali claims the NU and the Muhammadiyah are showing signs of shifting in a conservative direction, pointing to the influx of students who graduated from Middle Eastern universities in the 1980s.

Senior members of both organizations supported the July 28 fatwas. "There's a rising tide of Islamic conservatism [in Indonesia]" says Greg Barton, an associate professor at Australia's Deakin University and scholar of Indonesian Islam.

"These people have been working for over a decade and only now are beginning to see the fruits of their labors," says Mr. Barton.

Back at the Utan Kayu Theater, Ms. Nong breathes a sigh of relief, after promises from nearby community leaders to support JIL. The group, along with the radio station, is safe for the time being. "We've won in this neighborhood," she says. "But the war of ideas will continue."

Tom McCawley is a correspondent with the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Two Reformed groups seek closer ties

Stephen Brown

EVIAN, France — Two groups of Reformed churches are working toward a closer relationship, according to leaders of the organizations.

The main governing body of the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) agreed on Oct. 14 to meet with leaders of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), which is headquartered in Grand Rapids, MI, to discuss a closer relationship.

"This is a historic development which will be a strong message from these two organizations that serve the Reformed family," said the Rev. Setri Nyomi, WARC's general secretary.

WARC has 75 million members in 218 churches in 107 countries; REC has 12 million members in 39 churches in 25 countries.

The decision by the WARC governing body came in response to a proposal put forward in July by the REC's general assembly.

The two groups will discuss the sharing of personnel and projects and whether REC will become an affiliate of WARC. Some WARC executives said they would like the two groups to work towards "full unity leading to the creation of a new entity."

REC General Secretary Richard van Houten said his organization was founded in 1946 as an alliance of Reformed churches that weren't members of WARC. But from the 1960s onwards, he said, many churches have become members of both bodies.

Van Houten said REC would not want its churches to be forced to join the world alliance, and would like to retain its identity.

In a letter to Nyomi, Van Houten wrote, "The proposal is challenging, probably to both our organizations. It calls for rapid action and big changes."

Speaking to the WARC committee, Van Houten warned, "It's a complex proposal, and in the United States we have a saying: 'The devil is in the details.'"

The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), WARC's president, said, "There is a new energy between us and the Reformed Ecumenical Council that has been growing over the years."

Freedom of religion is key issue at 'European' conference in Turkey

Clive Leviev-Sawyer

Sofia (ENI) — The question of freedom of religion dominated a conference in Turkey between the Orthodox church and a grouping of mainly Christian democrat and conservative parties in the European Parliament.

The European Union on October 3 opened talks with Turkey about possible membership of the 25-nation EU, and an issue relating to joining that was raised at the October 20-21 Istanbul conference was Turkey's treatment of religious matters.

Majority-Muslim Turkey is officially a secular state, but churches have raised

complaints of pressure on the country's minority Christian population and of discrimination against them.

In particular, the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has been demanding the Turkish government to allow the re-opening of the country's only Orthodox seminary on the island of Heybeliada (Halki), near Istanbul, which was closed in 1971 after a court ruling.

"We have a right to have our churches and schools open. We want complete freedom of religion," Orthodox Metropolitan Emmanuel told journalists. "If we do not receive the

freedom we deserve, then radical religious circles will come into being."

The European People's Party said after the conference: "The participants concluded that re-opening the Halki Theological School and the restitution of religious properties to the Christian communities on the islands of Gokceada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos), and the reopening of the Catholic Church at Bebekli is the test of truth and authentic religious freedom in Turkey."

Camiel Eurlings, a Dutch member of the European Parliament who is the rapporteur for Turkey, said on October 21 that the EU

would pay closer attention to freedom of religion in Turkey.

As quoted by *turkishpress.com*, Eurlings said Turkish authorities must find a way to reopen the closed seminary. "If there is a will, a way can be found," Eurlings said, noting the seminary's continued closure made it difficult for the Orthodox church to recruit clergy.

According to a report in the Turkish daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, the deputy leader of the governing Justice and Development Party, Saban Disli, said that opening the seminary would violate Turkey's constitution and laws, but he said the authorities were trying to resolve the issue.

History

The origin of the first Christian Reformed Church in Canada

Donald Sinnema

November 16, 2005, marks the centennial of the first Christian Reformed Church in Canada – the Nijverdal CRC in southern Alberta.

The Dutch settlement in Alberta

The Dutch community in Alberta originated when some Dutch families and single men joined the great land rush for free homesteads on the western Canadian prairies in the first decade of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1903, these Dutch homesteaders settled northwest of Lethbridge, in what would become the communities of Granum (then called Leavings), Monarch, and Nobleford.

The first Dutch settlers were Dutch Americans who crossed the border from Montana. In 1904 and later years they were joined by other immigrant families directly from the Netherlands, many from the factory town of Nijverdal, in the province of Overijssel.

Almost from the beginning of the Dutch settlement home worship was practiced by some of the early families. The first such service was held the very first Sunday after the Gerrit Withage and Jan ter Telgte families arrived in March 1904 from Manhattan, Montana. Withage led a service for these two families in ter Telgte's homestead house. Years later Withage's son Chris described the event:

It was late at night on March the 3rd 1904 that the ter Telgte family and our family arrived in Macleod. On Saturday morning, March 5, Mr. ter Telgte and my father arrived with the freight cars (by the way, we had been sleeping on the floor in the old Macleod station then for 2 nights). The freight cars were unloaded, and towards evening we started from Macleod. That evening at around 11 o'clock we arrived at a house 2 miles south of this church.

On Sunday, March 6, my father led the first religious meeting of Christian Reformed people in Alberta. How well I remember singing, "Geloofd zij God met diepst ontzag," and "Hoe lieflijk, hoe vol heilgenot," and at the close, "Heer, ai! Maak mij uwe wegen, door uw woord en Geest bekend."

Appeals to the CRC for help

Some of the early Dutch families in Alberta had a Christian Reformed background, since they were members of the Manhattan CRC in Montana.

From among these families came two initiatives to seek the help of the CRC in the United States. The first initiative was a letter from Jan ter Telgte to the Manhattan CRC in the summer of 1904. In July ter Telgte's fifth child Jan was born on the homestead at Leavings. Since his family still belonged

Ter Telgte house where the first informal services were held.



to the Manhattan CRC, ter Telgte asked the Manhattan consistory for advice on what to do about the baptism of his child, now that their family was living several hundred miles away.

At its September meeting the consistory was not sure what to do about baptizing in such a case, outside of a regular worship service. So it proposed to send its own minister, Rev. James Holwerda, to make a classis visit to Alberta at an appropriate time to check out the situation. It also decided to write Professor William Heyns, Professor of Practical Theology at the Theological School in Grand Rapids, for advice about this case.

Heyns apparently suggested that the consistory seek the official advice of Classis Orange City on the matter. At this point Classis Orange City included the huge territory from northwest Iowa to the Pacific.

In a second initiative, some "private person from Leavings" – probably ter Telgte again – sent a letter to the CRC Home Missions Board with a "request for mission work there" in Alberta. By March 1905, when this request was considered by the Board, 13 Dutch families and as many single men were already living in the settlement, so it was a field ripe for "mission work."

In the early years of the Home Missions Board "mission work" meant sending a home missionary to minister to groups of Dutch families scattered across North America and to organize new Christian Reformed churches in these areas. The executive committee of the Board simply referred this request to the regular Home Missions Board meeting in June.

Meanwhile, at its March 1905 meeting, Classis Orange City decided to follow Manhattan's suggestion to send Rev. Holwerda to Leavings for a classical appointment. It also addressed Manhattan's question "whether

children may be baptized in a part of the congregation that has settled elsewhere," and advised the Manhattan consistory "to give their minister such a mandate in this special case."

In its April meeting the Manhattan consistory considered the classis' advice. It decided to allow its pastor Rev. Holwerda to go to Alberta for two Sundays in May, and baptize the children of the congregation.

First visit from a CRC pastor

On Thursday May 11, 1905, Rev. Holwerda arrived by train at Lethbridge. According to early church records, the purpose of the visit was not only to preach for two Sundays in the Dutch settlement and to baptize, but also "to find out if it would be possible to establish a congregation."

On Sunday morning, May 14, Holwerda preached on the east side of the settlement in the home of Jan Postman, a homestead shack 14 x 16 feet in size. About 40 people attended. Since it was under the auspices of the Manhattan CRC, this was the first official Christian Reformed service in Alberta. Even in these primitive conditions it is noteworthy how much care was taken to provide the trappings of an official service with the minister on an elevated pulpit. A letter provides the details:

The church was a small wooden shack temporarily inhabited by P[Postman]. The pulpit consisted of a large chest turned over, a board nailed vertically against it, and a smaller box nailed on the board with the bottom up. On the large chest stood the dominie; on the small one attached above the pole lay his Bible. Seating places were made from beams, planks, blocks, chests, etc.

This 'church' stood on a high point from where you can look over the colony. So an onlooker from there that morning could see the churchgoers coming. A few on foot, as

in Holland, but most on wagons or on horseback, a couple even on a prairie sled. Since there was no clock to sound, and not all watches tell the same time, not everyone came on time. A little after ten, however, everyone was present, about 35 adults and some children and babies.

It was something peculiar. Psalm-singing ringing over the prairie from the shack or shed, surrounded by the usual things like firewood, logs, barrels, etc., and also by a number of wagons and other vehicles, with the hay-eating horses tied to them.

In some things the worship service bore an

American character. Thus (as is customary here) some mothers brought along their babies who were freely allowed to enjoy their mother's milk during the sermon, to stop the crying. That is something a young mother in Holland would not do so quickly in church....

So on May 14, 1905, for the first time God's Word was delivered by Rev. Holwerda of Manhattan, to those scattered in the land of loneliness, as the Reverend said, dedicating us to God in his prayer.

That afternoon Rev. Holwerda preached at the Postman shack again and baptized Jan ter Telgte and Janna Postman, children of parents whose membership was with the Manhattan church. At this service about 60 persons were present, about half of the Dutch settlement at the time.

During the following week Holwerda visited families on the east side, and on Wednesday evening he met with thirteen men at the Withage home. At this meeting all thirteen signed a petition requesting the Home Missions Board to send a missionary to work in the settlement. The petition itself simply reiterated the private request to the Board a few months earlier, but gave it more weight.

The next Sunday Holwerda preached twice in a home on the west side of the settlement. During the week he visited the west-side Hollanders and also held a meeting that produced a similar petition to the Missions Board. Also at this meeting it was decided to gather on Sundays for reading services and to have Sunday school, both of which were also done on the east side. Even without office-bearers, these decisions initiated a regular pattern of church life on both sides of the settlement.

But due to the distances – 24 miles from one end of the settlement to the other – a single Sunday school and unified reading

Remembrance

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

A few weeks ago, I was startled out of my sleep by loud angry voices coming from the street below our hotel suite in a bustling U.S. city. The fact that I was on the eighth floor did not mute the intensity of the argument. Two couples were having at 2:30 in the morning! As I sleepily tried to tighten the balcony sliding door to drown out the accusations the couples were hurling at one another, I ungraciously wished them a pounding migraine in the morning should they decide to sleep off their suspected inebriated state. Even my mild mannered spouse got riled and he eventually called the cops in an effort to stave off the escalating domestic conflict. And so, the police once again had to take control of a situation the couples had no skills to resolve.

Conflict – normal part of life

The reality is conflict is normal in life because most often it is part of the process of growth. To the chagrin of my spouse, I label our struggles as “creative conflict,” which means we need to “change” in some respects and move “forward.” Unfortunately, from his perspective, “forward” often means moving to a place he does not want to go.

In any case, if we can see conflict in a positive or at least a neutral light it can help us learn more about one another in a way that will make us feel less threatened and more willing to work towards understanding and resolution.

This also holds true for conflicts between church communities, ethnic groups

or nations at large. At the same time, brutal honesty tells us resolving conflict is and has never been easy.

On a larger scale

Every November, we remember those who experienced the horrors and savagery of war for the sake of freedom because of our inability to solve international conflicts in a more peaceful way. I think we should also use this month to celebrate what efforts have been made in resolving conflicts peacefully so no one fought or died in vain.

A study by the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia shows contrary to popular thinking, the world is actually a much safer place than it was a couple of decades ago.

Andrew Mack, author of the study and former director of the strategic planning unit for United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, found “there has been a dramatic drop in the number of violent conflicts and genocides since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, wars are not only far less frequent today than they were before and during the Cold War, they are also far less deadly.” This analysis flies in the face of general perceptions that the world is becoming a more dangerous place. Mack and the report “put some of the responsibility for this popular misconception on the distorting focus of the media.” He also found “international terrorism accounts for an insignificant number of violent deaths on the global scale” (at least before 2003).

This November we may want to ponder peace at home and abroad



Willingness to negotiate

The road towards international peace is about the willingness and the ability to negotiate conflicts between nations. The study found “the UN together with other global agencies like the World Bank, has been remarkably successful in either stopping or preventing armed conflicts and genocides, despite well-publicized failures such as Rwanda and Darfur.” Equally encouraging was the “sharp increase in the number of conflicts (that) ended in negotiated settlements rather than military victory by one side or the other, and about half of all peace agreements made between 1946 and 2003 have been signed since the end of the Cold War.” (all study quotes by J. Manthorpe, *Vancouver Sun*, Oct. 17, 2005)

I could not help but think of the fallen Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein whose only capitulation to any kind of international

cooperation occurred after the U.S. soldiers hunted him down. When they finally found him hiding in a hole in the ground he sputtered: “I am the Iraqi president and I am ready to negotiate.”

This in turn reminded me of a sad elderly gentleman who once told me he learned a lot about negotiation and conflict resolution when he was going through his separation and divorce. He wished he had learned these skills when he was newly married, rather than when love

had died on the altar of stoic ignorance and self-righteous indignation. Nowadays, we have easy access to seminars if we wish to brush up on these important life skills.

Negotiating differences between spouses, family members, business colleagues, community members or nations is a healthy trend. We should appreciate this growth in our contemporary life even if the underlying causes have not yet been solved. Just going through the process allows us to learn more about one another. So, this November lets also celebrate the grace of God reflected in our efforts towards peaceful relationships at home as well as abroad.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca



Origin...Continued from p.10

services were not feasible in those work-horse and wagon days. The pattern of separate activities on the east and west sides that eventually led to two churches was evident already at the beginnings of church life in the settlement.

Home Mission efforts

At its June 1905 meeting the Home Missions Board considered the private request for a home missionary. It probably also had in hand the two petitions sent from the Alberta settlement, but the request was the same. In reply the Board simply assigned the Leavings community to the Classical Home Missions committee of Classis Orange City.

The Home Missions committee of Classis Orange City then sent home missionary Rev. Frederick Stuart to Leavings to check out the situation and find out if a congregation could be established.

When Rev. Stuart arrived in Alberta he preached the first Sunday, August 13, in the Rocky Coulee schoolhouse, a country school that had just been erected in May on the west side of the settlement. The next Sunday he led services in the shack (16 by 16 feet in size) of the Kooles brothers on the east side. The Kooles were not church members, but they were friendly and community minded.



Rocky Coulee School, the first place of worship of the Nijverdal CRC

At a meeting held before the afternoon service that Sunday (August 20) there was discussion about whether to organize an official Christian Reformed congregation. Support for the idea was strong. A request asking Classis Orange City “to establish a congregation here” was signed by all the men present, though some said that signing

this request did not mean that they would immediately become members.

Organizing the Nijverdal CRC

Classis Orange City met that fall in Sioux Center, Iowa. On September 28, 1905, it addressed the request from Alberta. The minutes read: There is a request from Leavings,

Canada, and one from Farmington, Montana, to become organized as congregations of our church. Both requests are granted with the understanding that the organization of Leavings, Canada, shall be done on the condition that they as a congregation be willing to meet in the Rocky Coulee schoolhouse, until another middle location is found. The committee to carry this out is Rev. J. Holwerda and home missionary M[eindert] Botbijn. The classis also assigned Rev. Botbijn to spend two weeks to do mission work at Leavings. Holwerda was appointed counselor of the new church, and he was to do one classical appointment there.

It is clear that a major concern of the classis was the unity of the congregation. It wanted the new church to worship together in a central location, despite the distance between east and west sides. The Rocky Coulee school at this point was the only facility between the two sides of the settlement, but it lay on the edge of the west side, so east-siders would have to contend with the greater distance. This school was considered only a temporary location. The clear assumption of the classis was that the new church would erect its own building at a central location midway between the two sides of the settlement.

See *Origin* page 17...

Remembrance

The quiet Dutchman (Part 3)

R. Hulstein

As soon as Dad was taken away, mother sprang into action. She bundled the little Jewish boy in the baby carriage and told my sister and me to take him to her sister who lived close by.

It was by now well past curfew and we had to walk through alleyways and private property to reach our aunt's home. It was essential to get him there just in case the Gestapo had second thoughts about that little boy and that very pregnant woman.

The possibility that Dad might be tortured also came to our minds, so it was wise to move baby Jacques.

We managed to make the delivery safely, and told the rest of the family about Dad's arrest. They, in turn, phoned others that were involved in the Jewish Rescue Committee with Dad.

The next morning I retrieved the briefcase from the gutter of our house and passed it on to the wife of Dad's partner, Mrs. Ina Smit, who would know what to do with it.

So, there we were – Mother left behind with nine children, ages 2 to 15, and her husband somewhere in the custody of the Gestapo. How she managed to keep sane, I don't know.

Within a week she was informed that Dad had been transported to the concentration camp in Amersfoort, a town about 45 km west of us. By this time our food supply had dwindled, but with the help of some of Dad's customers, many of whom were farmers, we managed to barter for some food supplies.

Our situation, however, was certainly not as bad as it was in the western provinces of Holland. There, people were dying. Many were so hungry that they packed up their personal belongings in baby carriages and push carts and walked for many days into the countryside to barter with farmers for food. At times we even shared what little food we had with those that came to our door begging for something to eat.

The closer the Allied Forces came the more brutal the Germans became. A terrible form of reprisal came to the little village of Putten, just west of us. Some of the Underground Forces had attacked a German Convoy. To teach the populace a lesson, the Germans rounded up all the men in the village, shot many of them and sent the rest to a concentration camp, from which few returned. Then part of the village was set ablaze.

Today this town, now much larger, is often referred to as "The Town of Widows."

Mother's time to give birth to yet another baby was approaching, so arrangements had to be made for us children to stay with other family members. Some of the girls were lucky – they got to stay in one home together. Others had to be separated. But all of us found a place with relatives. My brother Henk and I stayed with an uncle,

one of Dad's brothers, and we were okay. Our little Jewish brother was with us as well. The younger ones, however, were miserable away from Mom and their own home.

On January 1, 1945 it was time for Mom to go to the hospital, but there was no transportation to get her there. There were no taxis and no buses. All we had were two old bikes with wooden wheels. But one of our uncles turned up just at the right time and took command. Looking out the window, he saw a farmer with a horse-drawn farm wagon approaching. Stopping him, he asked him if he would be so kind as to take this very pregnant woman to the hospital.

The farmer agreed, and with that my uncle picked up Mother and heaved her onto the wagon.

We watched her slowly disappear from sight, still waving at us. I felt very sad, and I remember feeling very sorry for her and the circumstances she found herself in.

We returned to our relatives. The next morning we heard that we had yet another addition to our family. It was another girl, who was named Irene, a very appropriate name as it means Peace. She was born in the middle of a very cold winter, in a war-locked country, on January 2.

Henk and I went to visit mother in the hospital, walking 10 kilometres on a very cold day in January. It was strange to see Mom in a hospital bed. All the other children had been born at home. Irene was the only one born in a hospital. And there was no father around to welcome the new birth and give Mom emotional support.

Mother returned home with the little one first, and within a week we were all home together again. Just being home again made things seem better, but for us it was the worst time of the five years of German occupation. Those were very dark days, with Dad in the concentration camp and his future uncertain.

Some time in the middle of March, however, one of dad's brothers came to our house very excited. The news was almost unbelievable: our father had been released from the concentration camp and was on his way home. A lady who was biking along the road from Amersfoort to Apeldoorn had met him and he had asked her to inform his brother that he had been released and was walking towards home.

I will never forget the happiness and joy of that day!

Our uncle and his son went to meet him on their bikes. But as the eight o'clock curfew approached, Dad had wisely left the road and asked for shelter for the night in one of the farms along the road, so my uncle and cousin return home without finding Dad. It was very disappointing, for they had biked a long distance.

However, early the next morning they were on their way once again, and this time they met up with him somewhere along the road and had a great and joyful reunion.

Dad arrived home at midday and what a

homecoming it was. We thanked the Lord for bringing him home to us! But we were all terribly shocked by how Dad looked. He was very thin and looked so sick. And I remember that he cried very easily. Every time he looked at one of us, tears started to flow.

He never talked about his experiences in the camp or what happened to him and the others. All he would say was that all the prayers for him were heard and that it was the Lord who set him free. He did tell us that one day he was called into the office of the camp and was told to get his belongings together. He was told he was not being sent to Germany with the others, but that he was going home. After he gathered up his belongings, he was escorted toward the gate and literally kicked in the rear end and out of the gate.

After the war we often speculated as to why he was released and who was instrumental in this. Was it the soldier that showed some humanity during Dad's arrest? About three years ago, while visiting old friends in Holland, we learned that our next-door neighbor, who served in the local police force, had signed an agreement with the Germans to co-operate with the authorities. We did not know this at the time. He was always a very good neighbor. He knew very well what Dad was doing during the war, and he even knew that the little boy in our home was not a relative but Jewish. Today we think that this neighbor may very well have been instrumental in Dad's release. The Lord indeed works in mysterious ways!

Had my father, this gentle and compassionate man, learned anything from this terrible experience in this concentration camp? He knew that the entire camp had been transported to Germany, where few would survive. But that knowledge did not deter him. Only a few weeks after his return, my brother and I were once again sent back to our make-shift bedroom. Apparently, things were back to normal again and our parents opened their home once more to feed and shelter those in need.

In April of 1945 the Allied Forces (mainly Canadians) advanced very close to the edge of our town. A canal divided our town, and the southern part across the canal was already in their hands. But it took another 10 days of fighting before we would be liberated.

Several months earlier, our family and our neighbors had constructed a shelter for our mutual protection for precisely this situation. It was a very large hole in the ground covered with several feet of soil. It was big enough to hold our family of 10 and the



neighbor's family of 13 people!

During the days of fighting and shelling, we all sat together in this shelter for many days and nights. I spent my birthday, April 16th in that shelter.

One night, Dad had to leave the shelter. He was still very weak and needed a more comfortable sleeping arrangement than those available underground. I went with him into our house and we both tried to get some sleep.

When we woke up early the next morning, we noticed that it was unusually quiet outside – no gunfire and no bombs falling. There was only quiet. Dad went to the window and peeked through the blackout curtains. On the morning of April 17, 1945, he saw the first Canadian soldiers walking behind the trees, guns at the ready.

What a sight! The long-awaited moment had arrived. At last we were free!

Dad quickly dressed and ran across the street. The first Canadian he accosted received a big bear hug. Then we started to yell, "Wake up, everybody, we are free! We are finally free!"

And with that, a mass of people flooded the street. I am afraid we prevented those soldiers from doing the job they were supposed to do. They were surrounded by a huge crowd of people, all yelling, shouting, laughing, crying and hugging.

The very next day, we had a thanksgiving service in our church and in many other churches in Holland. We gave thanks to whom all thanks belong – for freeing us from the terror of the last five years, for giving us our freedom back and for saving Dad and Mom and keeping our family together. Over the next several weeks there

Remembrance

were many house parties and street parties. We were free!

But not all of Holland had been freed yet. It would take another two weeks before all of Holland could celebrate with us.

Several weeks went by, and we began to wonder what would happen with our little Jewish brother, who was by now three years old. We had no idea where he had come from or who his parents were. Were they still alive? Or had they died in a concentration camp like millions of others?

But about three months after, we heard that a couple was in town inquiring about a three-year-old Jewish boy, possibly with the name of Sjakie, who was living somewhere with a very large family.

During their search, they inquired at one of our neighbors, who was able to tell them that there was such a little boy by that name living across the street. Realizing that their search was over, they bought a huge bouquet of flowers from our neighbor, who had a flower shop, and arrived at our door carrying a huge bouquet.

There they met their three-year-old son who had been taken away from them when he was only a few days old. He was now their only child. Their daughter, Esther, who would have been six years old, had been found by the Germans while she was in hiding like her little brother. What a joyful reunion!

What a blessing to see this father and mother, in hiding for so long, reunited with their only child. We all rejoiced with them – but at the same time we realized that we would now have to part with this little boy whom we had grown to love.

But he had very wise parents. They understood that it would take some time for this little boy to become accustomed to the fact that we were not his family and not his brothers and sisters. To him, the Hulstein's were his parents, and we were his brothers and sisters. So his parents, after staying with us for a few days, returned to their own place in the Hague and left Sjakie, whose real name we were told was Benjamin de Goede or Bennie.

After a week they returned to us again and spent more time with their son. They would go out for a day, just the three of them, to give Bennie time to get to know them better. But then they would again leave our little brother with us. In this way, we were all prepared for the day when we would have to let him go with his parents. And the day eventually came when Bennie left our home for good.

But we continued to have very close contact with the de Goede's, who were by now known to us as Uncle Flip and Aunt Borah. We made many visits to their home and we were all treated very royally by them.

In July, 1952 my fiancée and I left Holland for New Zealand, settled down there and were married the following year. After the war Holland offered very little opportu-



The Hulstein family

nity for my generation. Dad never recovered completely from the concentration camp experience and decided to leave Holland as well for the sake of the children. In 1955, Dad, Mom, my brother and nine sisters immigrated to Canada and settled in Vancouver. He did find work as a carpet layer but as the years went by it became increasingly more difficult for him to work. The letters we received in New Zealand made us aware that father would not live many more years, so we packed up once again, said goodbye to the friends we had made in New Zealand, and we once again joined our large family in Vancouver, arriving there on December 28, 1959.

Our two children Robert and Denise were born here in Vancouver and we became Canadian citizens and today are blest with seven grandchildren and a great relationship with brother, sisters and all the in-laws and their children. At this time of writing there are now more than 155 descendants of Henk and Grace Hulstein.

In the early 1960's, our Jewish brother Ben also rejoined the family. He wanted to be with Papa Henk and Mama Grace. He fit right back in again and joins us often at family gatherings, birthdays, weddings and anniversaries.

In 1966 the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver asked us about Dad's wartime experiences. The day of the remembrance of the Warsaw uprising was approaching and they wanted to honor someone who had been involved in the work of saving the Jewish people in Europe. We gave them the information they requested, and a great evening was organized without the knowledge of our parents. The whole family, including brother Ben, was invited to the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver.

An audience of about 350 people was gathered there, including many prominent business men and Rabbi Hyer, now living in

New York, and many speeches were given, all honoring our parents. Mom and Dad were sitting at the head table surrounded by their children. Dad was obviously and clearly uncomfortable. This was not his cup of tea.

After one of the speeches Dad was handed a large envelope and urged to open it. He discovered that inside this envelope were the deed and mortgage papers of his home. Across the amount still owing was written, PAID IN FULL. WITH THANKS FROM ALL OF US.

"Dad stood up and in his halting English he thanked them for this great and timely gift. He ended his little speech by saying, "All I did was my duty to my fellow human being." At this, the gathering rose and gave our parents a rousing ovation and a thunderous applause.

Since I was the oldest of the children, Dad asked me to say a few words. I did relate some of the terrible moments of the war, but I also shared with them some of the hilarious moments we experienced.

I told the audience about that Friday evening when I came home and found the house in total darkness and our Jewish quests all sitting in that total darkness, and how they made me "sin" for them by turning on the lights. And I told them about the day we all sat around the dinner table and the children kept on talking and talking until Dad blurted out, "Kids, keep your mouths shut!! Where do you think you are? In a synagogue?"

When I told this story I saw my mother flinch and she shook her head, but this story produced a roar of laughter from the audience. Once again it proved that Jewish people love to laugh, even sometimes at their own expense.

At the end, I thanked them on behalf of my brother and sisters for so honoring our parents. I also told them that we, as Christians, were a little bit ahead of them by not only having the Old Testament but also the

New Testament and that we already have the long-awaited Messiah while they still were waiting. This again produced a roar of laughter.

I told them that the disciples of Jesus found a man begging at the City gate. The disciples told this man, "Gold nor silver do we have but in the name of Jesus stand up and walk!" While I thanked them again for all they had done for our parents, I also said that we also have no gold nor silver to offer, no earthly possessions to give but that I would like to offer something far more valuable than all the riches of the earth, which is a prayer that Jehovah God may bless you and keep you and that his face may shine upon you and give you his everlasting peace.

As I returned to my seat I saw them all rise and give a thunderous applause. But my biggest moment was when I looked at my parents as they gave me a big smile and Dad was crying. The very next day this story appeared in the Vancouver Sun, "Jewish Community honors the quiet man and his wife."

Dad's health was rapidly deteriorating and he had to stop working altogether. But with his mortgage paid and a small pension also offered by the Jewish Community, he could stay at home. However, a little over two years later Dad passed away, after suffering from emphysema and other camp related illnesses. Again, several articles appeared about the "Quiet Man" that had passed away. Many letters of condolences were received.

Looking back, I feel during all these happenings that Dad was more in the limelight than Mom. Often forgotten is the amount of support she gave her husband in order that he could do what he felt he should do. She stood by him all the time. I will never forget her courage when she faced the Gestapo man in her home.

Yes, they were a team, and I am proud to have been their son. I am now already many years older than when Dad died at age 65, and I hope that I also have, and will show, some of that conviction in my life. I remember what Dad said when facing those that were honoring him in the Jewish Community Hall: "I was only doing my duty. God tells me to love him and my neighbor. My neighbor is anyone in need and anyone who needs help."

If all of us in this world of ours could say that and also live by it as this "Quiet Man" did, then there would be no more room for wars, no more room for hate, no more oppression. But we all realize that we can never do this on our own.

*Our neighbors are rich folk and poor,
Neighbors are black, brown and white
Neighbors are nearby and far.
These are the ones we should serve,
These are the ones we should love,
All these are neighbors to us and you.
Jesu, Jesu, fill us with Your love,
Show us how to serve
The neighbors we have from You.*

Ecclesiastes

The futility of all wealth

A.A. van Ruler

This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

Ecclesiastes 5:16

In these verses (12-16) the writer of Ecclesiastes adds a new observation to his series of reflections highlighting the futility of wealth. At first glance it sounds as if he is associating wealth with death – that he is pointing out that when you die you can't take anything you've gained in this life with you. "Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs" (14).

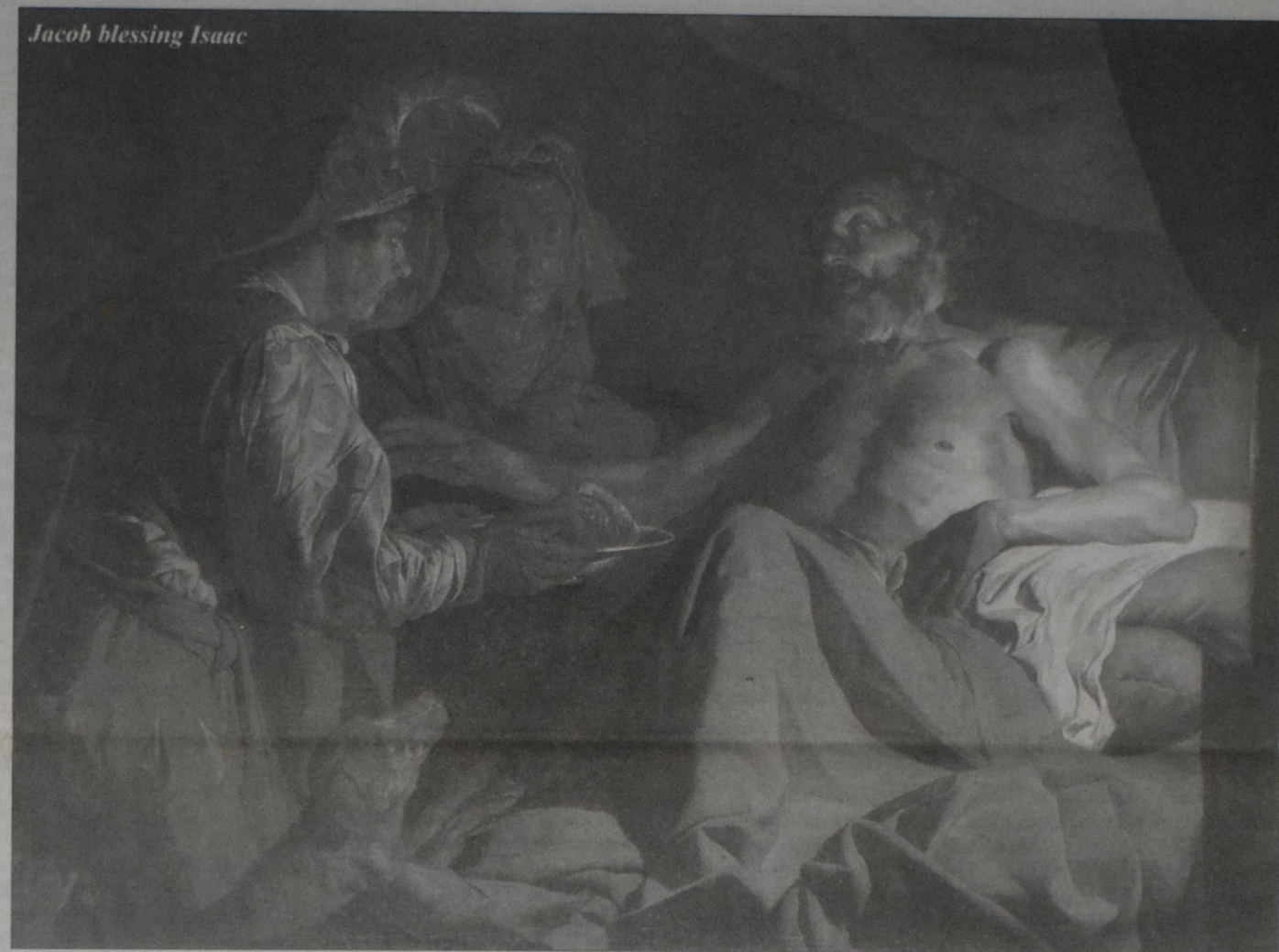
The Preacher certainly wouldn't deny that this is a big part of the futility of wealth. He would agree with Paul in I Timothy 6:7: "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."

We are not as quick to say this of other aspects of our earthly life. Death doesn't render all of life meaningless. We may, for example, accumulate much wisdom or develop a great measure of virtue or strength of character. Unconsciously, we tend to assume that these are things we can take with us into eternity. When it comes to love, Paul says very emphatically that love endures. It comes along, for love is a foretaste of eternity in the present. All material things, however, we must leave behind.

This is, however, not exactly the point that the Preacher is making here. Here he is talking about a man who has accumulated great wealth during his lifetime but who also lost it during his life, so when he dies there is nothing left of all his labors that he can pass on to his children. The question he focuses on is not whether he can take his wealth with him at death, but whether he can give his children and his descendants a headstart into the future with his goods.

Our offspring also give us a form of immortality or eternal life. In some mysterious way, we live on in our descendants. Our earthly labors derive a certain meaning or purpose if they produce something that helps our descendants gain a certain status in this world.

We must not belittle this notion, even if it does seem a bit primitive and Old Testamentish to us. But we could put it in more



Jacob blessing Isaac

contemporary terms: we could say that the individual isn't an atom in a closed world, but he is a moment in the historical process and part of the worth of his existence consists in what he contributes to the future, toward the unity and totality of the human race.

Communism was strongly in favor of evaluating the life of the individual in these terms. It went much too far, but it did capture a certain truth. We must not overinflate our importance as separate individuals. We must keep in view the larger whole, not only society as a whole but also the historical process. For we are part of it all. That larger whole must have some meaning, so when we're searching for the meaning of individual existence, let's not forget the meaning of the whole.

For most of us this larger connection takes on flesh and blood in our own children. Blood ties between parents and children represent a love that, as it were, illuminates the meaning of the historical process in its totality. When I look at my children, I see in a flash what

it is that I have lived for.

But there's still another facet in the Preacher's observation that occupies us here. As he sees it, it is a lamentable thing if at his death a person can leave nothing to his children of the wealth that he has worked so hard for all his life. It is in turn associated with what the Preacher twice calls "a grievous evil." It is deeply disturbing to him.

But what is this "grievous evil"? First he calls it, "wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner" (13), and later he further describes it as "wealth lost through some misfortune" (14).

We could call this the element of fortune in human life. By this I mean the element of chance, fate, unpredictability and uncertainty. Sometimes things turn out one way and at another time the very opposite. This happens in many areas of life, in the area of health for example. But it is most striking in the area of income, possessions and wealth.

To accumulate wealth takes a lot of dedication. But once you have it, the struggle is far from over. Then you have to work just as hard to keep it. And it often happens that all those efforts are in vain. An unforeseen combination of circumstances, a series of necessary interventions, or a crisis in the global economy – any of these can erase in one day all that you've worked for all your life.

This is what the Preacher is really talking about – the fickleness and unpredictability of wealth. It is here that the fleetingness and changeableness of human existence becomes tangible and deeply felt. Everything is always in flux.

We all struggle with this reality at some time. For example, it is no small thing to have to admit to ourselves that we are getting old. But this happens gradually. It is much more dramatic when someone who is very wealthy suddenly loses everything and is flat broke. And this happens, says the Preacher: you can suddenly be struck by misfortune and lose all

your wealth.

This is a grievous evil – "wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner." This is phrased in a somewhat sinister way, but it hits the mark. For this evil is not limited to the misfortune that causes the loss; it also anticipates verse 17: "All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger."

The point is the evil consequences of losing one's wealth. What happens in the heart of someone who loses such a fortune? Think, too, of the complaints, the recriminations between man and wife and the tensions in the family. When you think of everything associated with such loss, the sinister phrase – that wealth can be hoarded to the harm of its owner – doesn't look too far off the mark.

At any rate, these observations I think go a long way to making the Preacher's point. He wished to show that wealth, too, does not provide the foundation, content and meaning of human life. It is far too fickle.

Stories

Mom making the grade

Shelley L. Houston

The plastic costumes crowded the circular rack in the center aisle of the store. The price was \$4.95 — five per cent of our monthly grocery budget.

"Mommy!" Brian grabbed the edge of my denim skirt and pointed wildly with his other hand. "It's Papa Smurf!"

"Yes, Sweetie, it is," I agreed as I straightened my wrap-around skirt so as not to be exposed, "but we're going to make a costume this year."

"But I want to be a Smurf," he talked slowly as if I didn't hear.

"I know, Honey, but Grandma is sending an Indian costume that she made herself."

"What does an Indian look like?" He asked.

"You'll see!" I promised.

There were no Indians on Saturday morning cartoons. These were the days of Transformers, GI Joe, and Smurfs. Mike, his father, and I were concerned about Brian watching too much TV, especially the Smurfs who had gotten into incantations. No thanks! So, I was instantly adamant about not buying a ready-made costume to avoid the choice he would inevitably make.

Alright, that's not all I was thinking. In truth, this was my first chance to be the mom of a participant in a school costume parade and I wanted the win! A home-made costume meant a chance for personal glory that only a mother can know.

I was congratulating myself on being frugal as I purchased \$2.50 worth of materials to complete the ensemble. Grandma's muslin Indian costume had arrived with lime green and amber yarn fringe down the side of the pants and around the bottom of the vest. Pheasant feathers towered heavenward from the headdress. Grandma had been busy! I cleared my schedule to make time to add the finishing touches; the wig, moccasins and other accessories to insure the winning outfit.

Brian and his brother may have skipped meals because of my obsession, I wouldn't know. Certainly we all suffered from an abandonment of routine and normalcy.

Two days to go

The imitation suede moccasins were stitched and laced, the wig was thickly braided, and the Fisher Price hammer had been

identified as an appropriate tommy hawk. I figured I had spent about 20 mom-hours so far. At a dollar fifty an hour the costume had now cost us \$32.50.

I eyed my squirming son critically. His lily-white skin made the muslin look like leather. His blond curls stuck out of the wig in places. Time for a hair cut.

"What happened to you?" Mike swung Brian up on his shoulders as he walked in the door.

"I got a buzzzz," Brian repeated his new vocabulary word carefully.

"I see that," Mike looked at me as if I had scalped his first born. Which I had. Nothing could stop me now.

One day to go

"Mom, I'm c-cold." And his lips did have a slight blue tint as he was modeling his costume for adjustments again. I briefly came to my senses. He will be *outside* on a cold October evening. No problem. I saved another \$1.50 as I brewed a strong tea for dye and soaked a new white turtle neck (which cost another \$4.) I was sure it looked like Indian-skin color.

"Mom," why are you staring at me?" Brian asked, dribbling macaroni on his plate.

"Don't talk with your mouth full, Honey," and I pinched his cheeks, but they still paled to Lenox white.

"Owl!" Brian looked at me as if I had lost my marbles.

"Sorry, son, I was just wondering what we can do about your skin."

"What's wrong with it?" He started fingering his cheek as if he expected to find leprosy.

"Well, it's just so light, not like an Indian."

"But I *am* an Indian," Brian reminded me.

"One eighth Chickasaw doesn't seem to help much right now."

I was still thinking.

The day

Inspiration came to me like a dove descending on the Ark. Food coloring! Of course! I added half a bottle of red (another \$.27) to



a puddle of beige makeup in the palm of my hand and then realize that one was oil based and the other water based. No matter. I mixed it quickly, thinking it would merge somehow and lathered Brian's face and hands with the mess. His skin became stripped with beige and dark red.

"What's that?" Brian asked as he stood awestruck before the mirror.

"That's war paint," I suggested feebly. He wasn't buying it.

"I'm not going."

"Of course, you are," I challenge brightly. "I know it's not quite what we thought it would be, but we made your costume ourselves and that counts for a lot. Besides, it is going to be fun!"

He turned to slink out the door with his plastic 'tommy hawk.'

"What's that on your hand?" Mike asked about the red blotch on my palm as I handed him the toddler to put in the car. I wondered briefly if the police would consider it abuse to dye your son's face semi-permanently red. I couldn't think about that now. As we drove in silence, I figured that the costume had cost our family a week's peace and, including grandma's contribution and labor, about \$65.82!

Who won? A home-made Raggety Anne and Andy. They were cute. Perfect, in fact. Their mom wore an A+ smile.

Brian didn't even notice my loss. He ate cotton candy, threw bean bags, and even bobbed for apples. Brian's chin emerged from the tank with clear red streaks. Mike looked at me perplexed as to what that meant.

As we were headed to the car two parents walked in front of us with a child dressed in blue and white plastic. I hoped that Brian

The unexpected baby

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

As I breathed rhythmically through my labor pains, about to give birth to our fourth child, I heard piercing screams from the adjacent labor room: "Mama! Mama!"

"She's a teenager," my nurse explained. "She didn't know she was pregnant. She came to the emergency ward complaining of stomach cramps."

Shocked, I could hardly believe the scenario. My husband and I had eagerly awaited our son-to-be. During my pregnancy he had mouldered and shaped me, balloon-like. Each day the kick of his surfing feet reminded me, "Hey, Mom! I'm here and I'm growing! Pay attention!"

But this teenager had known nothing of the baby. She was forced to make the psychological switch from child to parent during the contracting and pushing of a traumatic labor and delivery. She came expecting an end to cramps, not a beginning to a life-long relationship.

An hour later I heard vomiting and male voices in the next room.

"The boyfriend has just been told he's a father," the nurse reported. "That's who you heard vomiting."

In the maternity ward after the birth of our son Benjamin, I speculated who the child-mother was. I looked for her among the other women as I strolled the hallways with my baby in my arms. Finally I identified her during a hospital exercise class. The physiotherapist who was explaining postpartum exercises asked a young woman, "Do you know how to do this exercise?"

"No," she admitted sheepishly. "I didn't even know I was pregnant."

Two days later she and her teenaged boyfriend signed out at the desk. The baby was securely strapped in a car seat, ready to go home.

I watched them go, wondering what would happen to them. Would the baby receive the love, food, shelter, and spiritual guidance needed to grow up strong and secure? Would the child-mother be caught in the trap of poor single motherhood, with little hope of a good education, child care, or a job? Would the father commit himself to loving the child and mother? Or would he leave them? Did mother, father or baby have any reason to hope?

I don't know what happened to that family. But I do know that the same Creator shaped both my longed-for Benjamin and the unexpected baby of the child-mother. Both are precious in his sight because he delights in the works of his hands.

Because God cares about every child he has created, I need to ask myself several questions. How can I show compassion and love to a single, pregnant teenage girl? How can I support parents who have children, but don't adequately care for them? What can I do to protect the lives of the unborn? How can I bring hope to families who seem to have little reason to hope?

If I ask God to open my eyes to the needs of women and children around me, he will show me ways in which I can display his love for them. Perhaps it will mean babysitting to let a single parent have a break. Maybe it will involve bringing a meal to a pregnant woman living in a stressful situation. Possibly God will lead me to invite women to my Bible study, and welcome children to a story hour so they can experience community as they learn about God.

I praise God because "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). And I want my praise to overflow into acts of love and hope towards others who were created by him, whether they realize it or not.

hadn't seen him, but he had.

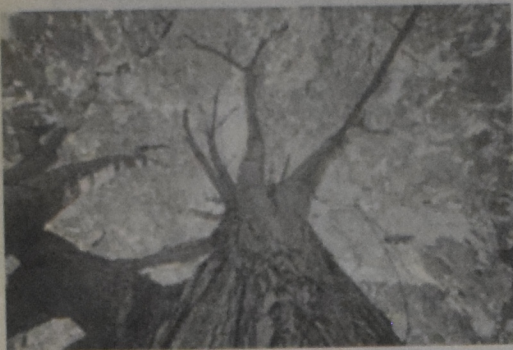
"I wish I could have been a Smurf," he said.

"So do I," I whispered.

Shelley L. Houston is a free lance writer who lives in Eugene, OR with her husband of 35 years.

First person

Solitude



Christopher De Vinck

In this house, I am surrounded by oak trees, some so large that I cannot reach around their trunks and touch my fingers on the other side. In the summer, if you flew over my neighborhood in an airplane, you would only see a rich canopy of leaves, and nothing more. The tree-umbrellas above my head gives me, yes, a sense of protection, but also, depending on my mood, a feeling of confinement.

Perhaps our perceptions of the changing world depends upon our own inner sense of where we are at the moment. When we are sad, we regret the hanging grape vines and screech of the cicadas. When we are content we admire the wheat field, or the rise of a distant mountain.

My nephew stands in our back yard, and as he looks up to the tall oak trees, he says, "It's like being in a cathedral."

When I was a boy, and my sisters and brother and I were playing the piano, or working out deals in a Monopoly game, or building space cars with an Erector Set there came to me, sometimes, a distant feeling, a longing for solitude, a sadness perhaps. I felt the urge to be alone, outside, beyond the shadow of the house, somewhere inside the woods, tracking rabbits, or searching for bird nests.

I remember quitting the Monopoly game, turning in my pink and white bills, slipping on my sneakers, and walking towards the back door, through the kitchen which had a real, tin ceiling. My mother was making pea soup. My grandmother and grandfather were sitting at the kitchen table reading the newspaper, sipping their coffee. The white clock on the yellow wall groaned through its little gears and I said, "Come on, Moses."

Moses was my black cat: long, clever, at ease with the boy calling its name. Moses came into our

house because children down the street saved it from drowning "and would you like a kitten," they asked as I bought lemonade from their lemonade stand. "The grocery man was going to

drown it." So I brought it home to our cat that was nursing her own four kittens. "We'll name him Moses," my mother suggested. "Saved from drowning," and the stray kitten quickly began sucking in the life-saving milk of the mother cat.

So I opened the back door, let Moses out first, and then I ran along the back porch, jumped over the four wood stairs and ran into the woods with my black cat which looked like steady streak of ink rushing along side me.

Whenever I entered the woods with my cat, I knew that I would find something wonderful: mushrooms, jack-in-the-pulpits, a woodcock perhaps, deer tracks, a quartz pebble. Sometimes I sat on a rock in the middle of the woods and just listened to the woodpecker jabbing-jabbing into the side of a tree hunting for ants and grubs, or I'd wait for the Canadian geese to honk on cue as they flew invisibly over the thick shawl of trees.

Once I found a round turtle about the size of a dinner plate on its back grasping the air with its claws trying to flip itself over. I stood over the turtle and watched. Moses stepped forward, reached out with one paw, and make a quick jab at the turtle's belly. The turtle pulled in its legs and head. I reached down like a giant, picked up the turtle and placed it on its belly, then I walked a number of yards to my rock, sat and waited. Moses joined me, sat at my feet, and began licking his fur and paws.



After a few moments, I saw turtle legs sprout out from under the stable shell. The next minute a turtle head extended out from the front of the shell, then a tail. Moses looked up without any interest.

Remembering Remembrance Day

When I was a kid we had Remembrance Day off from school, but I was always glad when the cardboard crosses and paper poppies disappeared for another year. In class we memorized *In Flanders Fields* and drew posters around the ubiquitous slogan, "Lest We Forget." We usually had an assembly the day before. The Legion would send a local hero to try and help us understand the misery of war. We sang *God Save the Queen*, *O Canada*, and *The Maple Leaf Forever*. We celebrated our freedom and rightly honored the memory of those who paid the ultimate price for the cause.

For my part I wrestled with feeling guilty about my German heritage, and the guilt of feeling guilty about it. Painfully aware of what "my people" had done, part of me wasn't so sure I didn't really deserve the insults from my classmates who called me "Nazi" when the teacher wasn't listening.

The real discomfort came at home. I would recount highlights of the assembly. My mother's favorite response was, "But your father was shooting in the wrong direction." I recall her anger and resentment whenever she talked about the war. She grew up in Hannover, a large city in Northern Germany. Her family was bombed out four times, losing nearly all their worldly possessions early in the war. Twice she came home from work only to find that the apartment building she had left in the morning was a now pile of rubble.

She told me how they slept with their clothes on at night, shoes and jacket beside the bed in case the air raid siren sounded. They lived with strict curfews, blackout regulations, and very little food. My grandparents had a radio and at night a few neighbors would gather in their living room to listen and try to understand British broadcasts. My mother's job was to watch out the bedroom window and holler if she saw headlights of any sort. Army trucks regularly patrolled the streets, attempting to detect any radios in the area. The penalty was severe, so my mother's role as lookout was crucial.

They were kept in the dark in more than the literal sense. According to my mother they had absolutely no idea of the holocaust until after the war was over. For several years many Germans (including my mom) were certain it could not have happened. I suspect much of her bitterness stemmed from feelings of being betrayed by her country, and perhaps guilt at being so focused on survival that she was blind to the persecution and abuse on her doorstep.

Slowly the turtle began walking in the direction of the swamp – on its way to the water where the geese swam, and where the night frogs sang under the August moon. Moses and I walked home.

Last night I decided to drive to the supermarket because I wanted to have a roll of film developed. I said to Roe, my wife, "I will be back in a half hour." I almost called out, "Come on, Moses."

To reach the store, I had to drive

past the airport, a small place for private planes. What I like about the airport is that it is one of the few places in town where there is a horizon. There are no trees to obscure the view. It was dusk. The red sun spilled her last bit of paint against the western sky. I stopped the car and watched the clouds turn from white, to red, to bronze and slowly to black as the sun closed in upon itself and disappeared. I felt like pulling in my head and arms, and rolling into the mud on

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke



Her voice resonated with contempt when she told me, "Hitler only ever kept one promise. That was when he said, 'Give me five years in power and you won't recognize Germany anymore.'"

When it came to war memories my father was, in a word, haunted. From time to time I'd find him on the sofa, listening to old records, staring off into space. He grew up as the only son of the village blacksmith (and "Burgermeister") in a small, rigidly Catholic town in the Black Forest. Shortly before the war began, when he was eighteen, the army was his escape from an abusive home. He never dreamed of the brutality that lay ahead for him.

He served as a blacksmith with the infantry and was captured by the French early on. They gave him a job in the kitchen of a POW camp, and he actually gained weight from eating so well. The German army rewarded him for escaping from the French with a stretch on the Russian front. His countenance grew sad whenever he spoke of his time in Russia. Often his stories ended in mid-sentence. One night with tear-filled eyes he told me how he had to leave a friend behind in a trench to die an excruciatingly slow death. But the most shocking story he ever told me was how he had killed a young Russian man, "Just a kid really, some mother's son," in hand to hand combat. It was in Russia that he vowed he would leave Germany as soon as the war was over to find a place where such things could not happen.

These days I no longer feel the need to apologize for being German. Instead, on Remembrance Day I see the faces of aging veterans and feel a debt of profound gratitude for what they lived through in service for their country, my country – Canada. I think back to the tortured expression on my father's face and the sense of betrayal in my mother's voice and I am sorry that the days of their youth were stained so horribly by a demonic ideology.

And even though I have no memories of war itself, I do understand the concept of total depravity first hand. I know my own guilt over sins I've committed and times when I turned a blind eye to injustice for the sake of my own comfort. For me, remembrance begins at the communion table, when I consider the One who laid his life down for me so that I could live at peace for all time with my Creator. It is this death – his death – that puts the rest of life into proper perspective for me. God forbid that I should ever forget.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com

my back and disappearing into my own shell.

When I drove home, Roe asked me if everything was all right. I said "Yes, but I could use a back rub."

We went to bed, my wife and I, and as I laid on my stomach, and her warm hands slid against my tired back, I could see, through the dark, the silhouette of the oak trees and as Roe whispered, "Just relax, Chris," I closed my eyes and I felt, again, just fine.

Neighbors

The house next door



Tymen Hofman

We live on a very well-traveled street just less than a mile west of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a neat little one-story green house with an attached garage, set off by some nice shrubs and a large Silver Maple in front. We've lived there for 17 years already and many people know where we live. But when the subject of where we live comes up, few people talk about that neat little cottage, but many, many people remark, "Oh, you live next to that big white house with the ornaments on the lawn." And we always nod in the affirmative.

That house is noted in all of Grand Rapids for its bizarre lawn decor. Those who haven't ridden

by to see it first hand have read about it in the *Grand Rapids Press*, a large story, front page, with colored photos to catch the eye. It is, indeed, a famous house.

The house has a long history. It was a farm house before the area was zoned as residential. Whoever owned it reserved several lots in width and depth, so that the yard is immense, with many large trees and a lot of shrubbery. It once was owned by Dr. P. Y. De Jonge when he was a professor at Calvin Seminary. When he left town it had a succession of owners, four during the time we've been here, a couple of whom we wish had stayed. At present it is the property of a psychologist and her adopted daughter. Nothing strange about that except

the "daughter" is at least a decade older than her "mother." Also a story in the *Press*, in color!

But to get to the decor. The present owner specializes in these huge inflated figures in the boldest of colors, which are anchored in the lawn and make a statement about the season being enjoyed at any one time. As I write, we are nearing November and Thanksgiving time so that means that pumpkins are the order of the month – huge inflated eight-foot pumpkin figures, three high with the largest on the bottom. This is a rather modest display. There are only two of these monsters, plus a much smaller Tigger the Tiger. Usually there are at least five to ten of them. (I wonder where last

year's turkeys went.)

Last Christmas, twelve creatures graced the place, as near as I could determine. There was a Grinch, a soldier, (why he was there I do not know), a Snowman, (a Christmas regular), a polar bear, (a new addition to the Christmas story), Winnie the Pooh and Tigger, Pluto and Mickey Mouse, plus a few unidentified characters – all to make the children deliriously happy as they drove by.

But the most gorgeous display is for Easter. There are more bunnies and rabbits and large inflated eggs in a riot of colors than you've ever seen in one place. My memory isn't the greatest and I didn't keep notes (a weakness I must overcome), so I can't be too specific. With that, our street really rises to fame. While the display reveals nothing about the crucified and risen Jesus, it surely catches the eye and declares to every passerby that we are celebrating. It's all joy, joy, joy!

About this time you might be getting the idea that I'm a Scrooge, or at least an old cunnudgeon, poking fun at people who put a lot into celebrating the seasons and making things nice for their neighbors and the city of Grand Rapids. Maybe there is a bit of scrooge in me. But when I count the cost of putting

a dozen of these creatures on the lawn I come up with a figure of between \$800 and \$1,000. That is more money than this kid of the Depression can digest without comment. It also may be because when I've come to their door for the Cancer Drive I'm informed that "we give at the office," that I get the impression it's a lot of just plain show.

Now, if they were modern pagans I'd take a pass on their excess, but they go to a very famous megachurch in Grand Rapids, where many ex-CRC's and RCA's also have found refuge in the crowds. So it is not a matter of theological liberalism that underlies the displays that charms our city every season.

I, of course, am still a sinner. And one of my sins is that I am seriously tempted to borrow my son's pellet rifle and sneak up on these creatures and have a good time hunting bunnies and getting the Grinch who steals Christmas. I must ask forgiveness for my wicked urges, of course!

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, MI



Origin ...continued from p. 11

Home missionary Botbijn, from Pella, Iowa, was the first to arrive in Alberta. He preached for two Sundays, on November 5 in the shack of the Kooles brothers, and on November 12 in the Rocky Coulee school. Rev. Holwerda later joined him to carry out their mandate to organize the congregation.

The organizational meeting took place in the Kooles brothers' shack at noon on Thursday, November 16, 1905. Rev. Holwerda gave a short encouraging meditation on Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock." The gathering was then informed of Classis Orange City's decision about organizing under the condition that the church should meet at the Rocky Coulee school until a better middle location was found. This was accepted by all present without objection. Membership papers were then submitted by those who were members of the Manhattan CRC – Willem Feller and the families of Jan Postman, Gerrit Withage, Garrit Willemsen, and Jan ter Telgte – as well as from Mrs. Geert Venhuizen and her chil-

dren. Since Mrs. Venhuizen was not present and her membership came from a Presbyterian church in Manhattan, it was decided that Holwerda and an elder should examine her about points of difference between the CRC and that denomination. The meeting was then interrupted so that Holwerda and Botbijn could hear those who wished to join the church by profession of their faith – Gerrit Bode, his wife Klaasje, Leendert Geleynse, Willem, Hanna, and Aaltje Willemsen.

Then Gerrit Withage and Garrit Willemsen were elected as elders and Willem Feller as deacon. They were installed into office, and the new confessing members professed their faith. Rev. Holwerda then presented to the new congregation a used Lord's Supper set as a gift from the Manhattan mother church. After a discussion about a name, it was decided to baptize the new church the "Nijverdal Christian Reformed Church," since many of the charter members were from that Dutch town.

A committee of four men was then selected to acquire a few acres of land for a churchyard in a central location.

After the congregation sang a psalm, Revs. Holwerda and Botbijn, in the name of the classis, expressed their joy that the first congregation of the CRC in Canada was established, and they wished her God's help.

After the meeting Holwerda and Botbijn met with the new consistory to select officers – Willemsen as president and Withage as clerk.

The new congregation began with six families and two individuals, 40 charter members in all, with 16 confessing and 24 baptized members. These 40 were only one third of the Dutch population in the settlement at the time. However, there were many other "friends" of the congregation who attended the services. Some of these later became Christian Reformed members; others were of a Hervormd background and later formed their own Reformed congregation at Monarch in 1909.

The following Sunday, November 19, Rev. Holwerda fulfilled his classical appointment and led the first official services of the Nijverdal CRC in the Rocky Coulee school – the first services of a Christian Reformed Church in Canada. He conducted the first celebration of the Lord's Supper and also baptized two children.

One church, two sides

For the first year the Nijverdal congregation met all together for worship at the Rocky Coulee school, but the distance was a burden especially for families on the east side. After a year the classis relented and allowed the east and west sides of the Nijverdal church to worship separately. Soon the east side was worshipping in the Finley school in their district, and the west side in the Rocky Coulee school. Only when a visiting minister or summer student was present did the two sides of the congregation worship together – one week at the Rocky Coulee school, the next week at the Finley school.

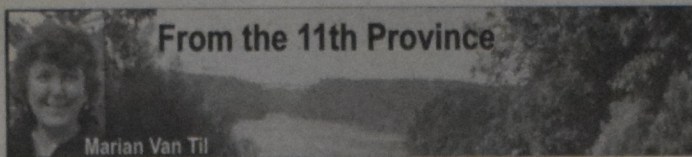
By 1909 each side of the congregation built a church building of its own. The first to open was the west-side (Granum) church, in February; then the larger east-side (Monarch) church in May. (The Monarch building has been restored in the historical village at Picture Butte, Alberta.)

Thus for a time the one congregation had two church buildings. In 1911, however, the Nijverdal CRC formally dissolved, and reorganized into two congregations – the Granum CRC and Monarch (later Nobleford) CRC. This past July these two congregations spent three joyous days celebrating their shared centennial.

Don Sinnema, a great-grandson of Garrit Willemsen, teaches theology at Trinity Christian College in Illinois. For the full story of the Nijverdal CRC, see his booklet, *Pioneer Church Life: The Beginnings of the First Christian Reformed Church in Canada (1903-1911); available from*

DonSinnema@sbcglobal.net

Opinion



From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

I've been thinking, lately, about a part of the creation we (usually) don't see: about spirits and about how their existence and activity in our world relates to God's providential care of us. There are, of course, evil spirits (demons, ghosts?) committed to the Prince of Darkness; and there are angels who worship the Lord: God's servants and messengers. This subject hasn't been on my mind because of the so-called haunted houses, ghost walks, and the amazing variety of Halloween paraphernalia that is still festooning stores on both sides of the border as I write this. I began thinking of it for another reason, which I'll get to in a moment.

Since early childhood I've been acutely aware that "this is my Father's world," that he profoundly cares for it (and us) and upholds it (and us) from moment to moment – including by enlisting his angels to do his bidding. The realization that, despite Satan's power, the world is God's and that God is always active in it and in our lives, is the legacy of having grown up in a staunchly Reformed household and extended family. But I also confess to a near life-long fascination with those angels who do his bidding. Perhaps that goes along with a well-developed sense of Providence.

I'm not talking about a sentimental view that allows one to believe that a person who dies (particularly a child) suddenly turns into an angel, or about the kind of slightly superstitious attraction that results in a penchant for displaying porcelain angel figurines on one's shelves. (I do admit to having been given a couple of painted resin "shelf angels" by students, and to cherishing these kitschy things, and even to displaying them at Christmas time: the givers were kids, after all, and it's the thought that counts).

It would be magnificent, I used to think, to be visited by an angel, such as various biblical personages have been. But now, I'm not sure I'd be up to it. (It would, of course, require a response of faith, which I hope I *would* be up to.) It's no wonder that the frequent initial human response to angel visitations in Scripture is *fear*. Angels reveal God's power in a peculiar way (and – something we usually forget – they carried out, and will carry out, his judgments, cf. Ps. 78:49, Matt. 13:39, Mark 13:27). Though they appeared as men, perhaps something about them revealed their disconcerting non-corporeal nature, they who live as spirit-servants in God's presence, in a part of the created universe as yet closed to us flesh-and-blood human beings.

But there's another kind of fear elicited by the world of spirits because there is another kind of angel: the kind who gave up their place in heaven, and who, like their

master, prowl around like roaring lions looking for those to devour (as the Apostle Peter puts it). The fear they can elicit arises not from awe but terror, a fear of Satan and his minions' power to do evil.

And that brings me back to why I've been pondering demons – and angels. One day earlier this fall when I set out to take a bike ride along the river, I encountered one of my neighbors, Mr. Rooney, walking his dog. This man in his 70s is of Irish descent, educated, a former businessman, the kind who, though talkative, doesn't seem the sort given to fancies. Almost immediately he began, "I don't know exactly what your religious views are (he knew I'm a church organist), or if you believe in *ghosts*, but..." He stopped there to see how I was reacting to that unusual lead-in. I was a little surprised, but answered: "If one believes in God, one surely must acknowledge the existence of spirits, as God is a spirit." "And so is the devil," I thought it important to add.

Mr. Rooney seemed relieved, and forged ahead with his story. The house three doors down from his was built in the 19th century, the first house in the area, a large farmhouse. The current owner, a woman of Mr. Rooney's generation, had told him previously that she had, on occasion, encountered a ghost in the house: the apparition of a woman with long red hair. And now, a few days earlier, it had shown itself again, scaring the living daylights out of a teenaged friend of the owner's granddaughter. The granddaughter had had a couple of friends over, and they were all to have slept overnight in a tent set up for the occasion. (I had seen the tent, and heard them having fun in the backyard, which is two properties down from my own backyard.) However, when one of the girls went into the main floor bathroom to take a shower, she quickly exited, pale and terrified: there was a red-haired woman standing in the shower, she said. And she called her mother to come and take her home.

In times past, the ghost had not seemed hostile, and the owner was not particularly afraid. That was not true, apparently, of her daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter. The son-in-law, a Seneca Indian, had, in fact, brought tribal leaders over to carry out an exorcism. (There is an active Christian church on the Seneca reservation, but the ritual was seemingly a native one, not a casting out in the name of Christ.) This resulted, the owner said, in the ghost merely moving from upstairs to the main floor (which struck me as quite funny).

Coincidentally, the very same day Mr. Rooney told me all this, my husband and I received in the mail a free copy of a glossy Buffalo-based magazine which carried a feature story about a whole handful of

alleged ghosts and hauntings along the Niagara River corridor from Lewiston to Youngstown.

So I began to consider "ghosts." No doubt there are hoaxes. But we Christians, of all people, know that spirits are real. (The near automatic propensity by many in our age to discount anything beyond the material world seems to me one of Satan's savvy tricks to lull people into not taking him seriously, thus helping him do his work.) In light of general scriptural teachings, I think we can fairly confidently conclude that God does not allow those who have died – not his own people, nor those who have rejected him – to put in material appearances at various locations across the globe. Such "ghosts," even though looking like people who have died, are indeed spirits in league with the devil – who is, after all, capable of many disguises.

It's not spiritually helpful to speculate unduly about why these minions appear to haunt (I use the word advisedly) certain places or people. But the following words of Jesus (Matt. 12:43-45) confirm the behavior. When the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons through the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, Jesus queries their skewed logic: if Satan were divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? Then he adds these peculiar words: "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

While many in our own "wicked generation" firmly deny the existence of both God and Satan, and of *anything* not doesn't stand up to empirical, "rational" proof, others – in reaction – have become fascinated, even obsessed, with the spirit world, and with "proving" that it exists. Some have entertained angels, but many others are going out looking for bizarre thrills in encounters with spirits. These spirits aren't *called* demons, and some of them don't seem overtly malevolent, but evil spirits they surely are. In the U.S. there are currently an astonishing number of documentary-style television shows that focus on the "paranormal," that attempt to communicate with the dead, and that go looking for dangerous spirits: for example, "Ghost Whisperers," "Ghost Hunters," "Crossing Over with John Edwards," "Sightings," "Strange World," "Haunted History" – and quite a few more. And that doesn't count the fictional dramas based

on similar themes. This phenomenon aptly illustrates Jesus's words. If we sweep, and keep, our spiritual houses clean and empty, not wishing God to dwell in us, what then enters in his place will leave us in a far worse condition.

Fire can warm and captivate. But playing with it can devastate.

We Calvinists are a rather rational bunch. We've downplayed evangelical approaches to, and concern with, spiritual warfare (and in some manifestations, rightly so). But in doing so, we must be careful not to dismiss the vicious power of Satan and his hosts, including, for example, the automatic instinct to psychologize demon-possession. There are a very large number of instances of demon-possession in the Bible, in both Old and New testaments. To write off all, or even most, of them as just a quaint way of describing what we know to be mental illness does violence to Scripture.

On the other hand, we must not allow Satan what is not his. He may cajole us and tempt us. Yes, he is deadly powerful, and yes he tries his best to snatch us Christ-believers out of God's hands, to devour us. Though we may see and feel his power – and it may even frighten us – he won't, can't, succeed. We know that. All of Scripture assures us that is so.

I've observed a tendency among quite a few orthodox Christians in recent years to depersonalize Satan, as mainline Christians have before us, a tendency that reduces him to caricature. That has pernicious consequences, I think. A caricature is more humorous than dominating. But there's nothing funny about Satan and his hordes. Christ did not take on our flesh, die and rise again to defeat a caricature, or a nebulous evil "force" that floats around the universe, origin unknown, destination uncertain. Christ crushed *Satan*; he bound *Satan*. And *Satan* – once cast out of heaven – will, when Christ's Kingdom fully comes, be cast, with all his helpers and followers, into the lake of burning sulfur. However figurative that may be, its meaning is clear: "They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10; and 14:10-11).

Meanwhile, in heaven, the great multitude – including all of us who are washed by the blood of the Lamb – will shout and sing day and night: "Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns! And he shall reign for ever and ever!" What is there to fear?

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>.

'And he shall give his angels charge over thee...'

Business Directory



"Autumn's sad comfort"

Lynn Klammer

Sometimes sadness brings with it a certain comfort, and that's why autumn, out of all the seasons, has always appealed to me. Autumn, with its fading blooms, waning sunshine and cooler temperatures is a transition period, like middle-age easing into the senior years. Its advance signals a time to prepare for the coming rest of winter. A time to complete the harvest of the summer's efforts, and anticipate the rejuvenation of the next life that spring will herald.

When I plant my bulbs, knowing that they won't show themselves until the following spring, I think of all the things I've done that I may never see the results of. When my time on this earth is through, it may seem as if I have completed my work, yet so much of the fruits of my labor may never be seen for seasons, or years, to come.

It's sad to see the flowers fade and plants die back. The leaves fall to the ground, and the trees look bare and lifeless as the wind turns cold. Life's magical beauty seems to be ending, yet amid the desolation and decay shines the majestic display of color that is synonymous with autumn. Like a sentinel of hope, autumn offers beauty amid the degeneration, gain amid the loss.

Yes autumn can be sad, but with it comes a special comfort. Just as with autumn, the end of our life has a beauty not always readily realized, a special promise not always remembered. It's a promise of renewal around the corner. Spring after winter. Life after death.

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Job Opportunities

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) announces the search process to fill the position of:

Executive Director of the CRCNA

It is anticipated that this senior executive position will be filled by action of the CRCNA Synod 2006 upon nomination by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. Suggestions or nominations of a potential candidate are solicited. Individuals wishing to be considered or desiring more information can request an application packet at the address listed below. The search committee will begin its selection process no later than early 2006, but the committee will consider all nominations and applicants until the nomination is submitted to the Board of Trustees.

The Executive Director position requires the candidate to be an ordained minister in the CRCNA. The selected candidate will be, or must indicate a willingness to become, a member of the CRCNA. In keeping with the CRCNA Equal Opportunity

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The CRCNA is a binational denomination (Canada and the U.S.A.) in the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith. Further information can be found on the CRCNA website at www.crcna.org. Questions and requests for hard-copy materials should be sent to:

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Executive Director Search Committee
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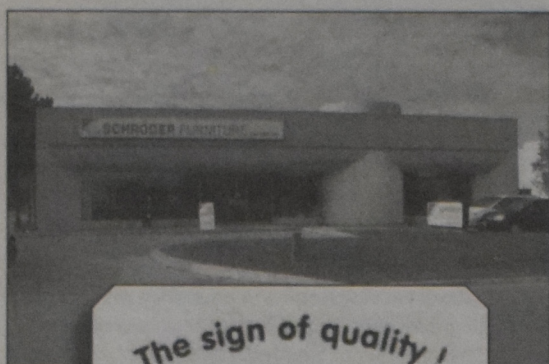
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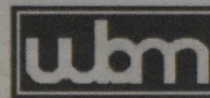
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF
EVENTS

Nov 9 The Bernard Zylstra Lectures, Dr. Paul Marshall, speaker, Redeemer University College, Ancaster. See details this issue.

Nov. 4-6 Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend, Peterborough, ON. For registration and info, e-mail: james.kulyk@sympatico.ca Phone: 905-987-4272 (See ad this issue)

Nov.18 Brampton, On. "Zingend Geloven" presents the Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing, 7.30 p.m. at Holland Christian Homes, Heritage Hall. With participation of the Mattaniah Choir, Herman den Hollander, Director; Andre Knevel, Organist; Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader and Rev. Jacob Kuntz, meditation. Free will offering. Info: 905-640-8929.

Know someone who may enjoy reading the Christian Courier?

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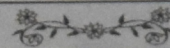
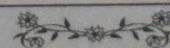
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News

Cancún faces tall task of rebuilding



Cancun street

Danna Harman

CANCÚN, MEXICO — Rosa Luisa Tapia, a grandmother of seven from Tres Reyes, a poor area on the outskirts of Cancún where most residents work in the tourist hotels and restaurants, is already turning her attention to the bleak prospects for the upcoming high tourist season.

"Who will come here now?" She wondered, looking frantically at her decimated one-room thatched-roof house. But she spoke only of the high end clubs and hotels nearby. "We have no houses, yes, yes. But if we have no work, we will have no food either," she said.

Cancún was turned into a wasteland as hurricane Wilma devastated resorts and turned vacationers into refugees. Tourism is Mexico's third-biggest source of foreign revenue, with vacationers spending \$11 billion per year, according to the Tourism Ministry. The Caribbean coast is Mexico's most popular destination, receiving 8 million visitors last year, 3 million of whom go to Cancún.

"Wherever you look, it's devastation," Cancún Mayor Francisco Alor said at an emergency meeting at the town hall Sunday. It could take, he said, "at least six months for the city to recover."

Mexico's president Vicente Fox had a more optimistic assessment while in Cancún Monday, saying it would take two months to restore "80 to 90 percent of the touristic capacity of Cancún."

"We're approaching the full tourist season, so speed is fundamental," Mr. Fox said, adding that "the economy here is called tourism."

Tourists still stranded

It was not clear how many tourists were stranded but one senior police official estimated there were about 20,000 just in Cancún. Ironically, on October 19 some 400 US, Canadian, and European travel agents gathered at Pat O'Brien's restaurant and pub for the opening of "Cancún Travel Mart," an annual event hosted by the local tourism board and aimed at introducing the "wonders of Cancún," to those who

then pass along its praises.

"We had the kickoff ... we talked about what a big season this was going to be — and then, well, we went to shelters and did not shower for four days," said Christine Adelhardt, a meeting planner from Toronto, Canada, who was wondering Monday how and when she would get home.

The airport remained closed Monday, Oct. 24 and, due to damage, it was unclear when it would open — while the road to the nearest airport in Merida was impassable due to high waters. Those few tourists who had managed to get to the Merida airport before the hurricane hit or through alternate routes were lined up as early as 4 a.m. to jostle for spaces on outgoing flights. Both the US and British consulates had set up desks at the airport to try to help their stranded nationals.

Looting

Meanwhile, downtown, looters were bike riding and walking through the flooded streets — to fill up supermarket carts with meats to last them months, shampoos to last a year. Hundreds broke into liquor stores, electrical warehouses, and private offices. "It's not robbery," explained Raul Lopez Vazquez, a social worker hauling a small TV out of a neighborhood store in a wheelbarrow, "because we are not breaking into the stores. They are open."

In some shelters tourists were instructed not to step outdoors and were given soldiers to guard them overnight, while other tourists were told to make their way to the town hall as they could not be assured of protection from vandals if they stayed put. Late Sunday, some tourists were seen joining in the looting, grabbing everything from cigarettes to bottles of water to radios.

Sergio Ribas, room service manager at the Marriott hotel, says there was great pressure from among locals to get the tourism industry up and running as fast as possible — and this would hasten the reconstruction process. "Tourism is our main — you could say only — source of income," he says.

Ms. Harman is Latin America bureau chief for the Monitor and USA Today.

Additional news from the CRWRC:

Jacob Kramer, CRWRC's relief team leader, said, "On previous occasions, we have learned that the main effect of a hurricane in this region of Mexico is flooding, which can last for weeks because of the poor drainage on the Yucatan plateau."

"The maize and bean crop, which is still on the land in this season, will be lost and with that the livelihood of the country people," he added. "In general, we are talking about a population with low social and economic mobility — many poor families and older people."

CRWRC, having responded to emergencies in the Yucatan twice before, will immediately provide families with roof tarps, clothing, and distribute maize, beans, and oil. Supplies will be distributed through local Mexican organizations and churches.

Donations marked "Hurricanes 2005/Wilma," can be made by calling 1-800-55-CRWRC (US) or 1-800-730-3490 (Canada), giving online at www.crwrc.org or sending by mail to: CRWRC, 2850 Kalamazoo SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49560 or, in Canada, PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8.

News Digest

Deforestation

A story in the Scientific American finds that selective logging in the Amazon Rainforest does more damage than deforestation.

The study was taken from data collected from three different satellites, which can focus on areas as small as 30 x 30 meters.

The finding seems to defy common sense. But the study found that for every tree removed about 30 others were severely damaged. The logging also opens up a space that accelerates drying of the forest floor. The logging equipment further tears up the floor.

The process releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, further increasing greenhouse gases.

Elephant grass

Britain is building a power station that is to be fuelled by elephant grass. When operational, the station will supply 2000 homes with electricity.

Why elephant grass? Burning the grass releases about the same amount of carbon dioxide as the grass absorbed from the atmosphere as it grew.

Power stations account for about one-third of all carbon dioxide emissions in Britain, so cutting these back will help the country to meet its Kyoto commitments.

Elephant grass looks like "overgrown ornamental bamboo," growing up to 5 meters tall. It is very quick growing. One hectare (about 2.5 acres) can produce some 15 tonnes of elephant grass per year.

It costs quite a lot to plant, since it grows from rhizomes, but once planted it can be harvested again and again. It also requires little or no fertilizer or insecticides. For the farmer it brings better returns than winter wheat. About 170 farmers will be growing grass for the power station.

Someone else is making headway in attempts to turn elephant grass into a biodegradable plastic strong enough to use in making low stress auto parts.

Lawn grass

The largest irrigated crop in North America is lawn grass. In the U.S. about 40 million acres are devoted to lawn grass. This isn't all bad, says the study, for lawns absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Still, watering them accounts for more than half of municipal water use in most areas, to say nothing of pesticides and fertilizer use. And lawnmowers aren't exactly pollution free either.

Reducing Alzheimer's risk

You can reduce your risk of contracting Alzheimer's by periodically going for a brisk walk — providing you can remember to do so. A study by Swedish scientists showed that middle-aged people who exercise are much less likely to develop dementia or Alzheimer's disease later in life. People who were genetically susceptible to Alzheimer's benefit even more markedly than others. The researchers speculate that the benefits result from increased blood circulation to the brain and lower blood pressure that comes with exercise.

Treatment for breast cancer

A trial of a drug called Herceptin developed to treat breast cancer has produced "stunning" results, according to the New England Journal of Medicine. Three studies showing a dramatic drop in cancer returning in the 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the 8,000 women who were involved in the study.

Dr. Gabriel Hortobagyi of the Cancer Center of the University of Texas called the findings "revolutionary." He wrote: "This observation suggests a dramatic and perhaps permanent perturbation of the natural history of the disease, maybe even a cure."

The study found that women who received chemotherapy and Herceptin simultaneously saw their risk of the disease returning cut by more than half within four years of diagnosis, compared with those who had chemotherapy alone.

However, the drug costs \$35,000 to \$45,000 for a year's worth of treatment.